IS IT A BIRD? IS IT A PLANE? NO, IT'S... **SUPERGIRL**

HOW TV'S HOTTEST HERO MELISSA BENOIST BEAT WONDER WOMAN TO THE PUNCH

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J-LAW REVEALS ALL ON THE EPIC FINALE TO THE HUNGER GAMES

- BEHIND THE SCENES ON MOCKINGJAY PART 2
- SPINOFF SERIES: THE RUMOURS AND REALITY
- THE #FEELS THAT BROKE THE INTERNET

ALSO INSIDE

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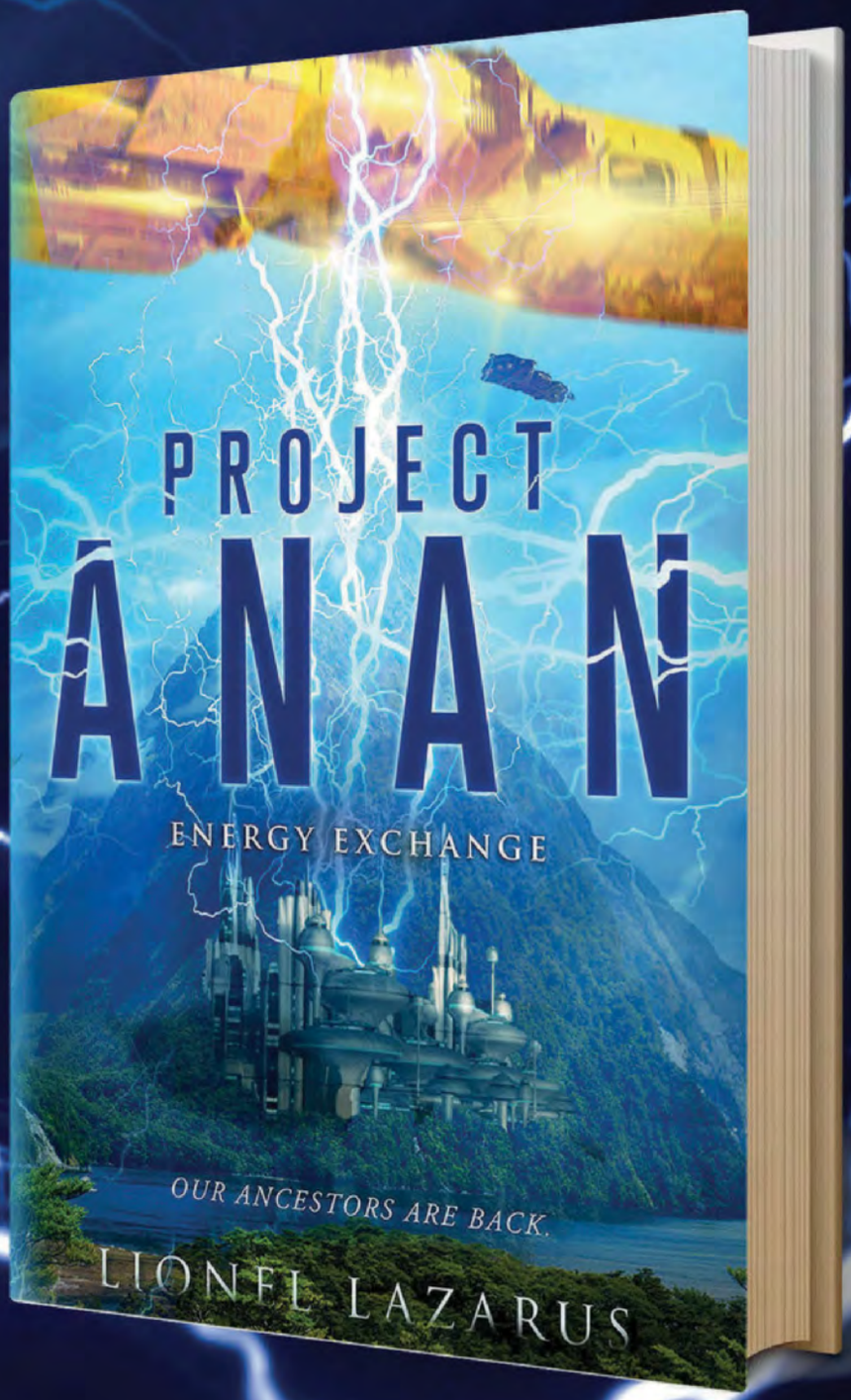
THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE //
HEMLOCK GROVE //
GHOSTBUSTERS 3 //
THE GOOD DINOSAUR //
THE LEFTOVERS //
ET: THE SEQUEL //

THE END IS HERE

OUR ANCESTORS ARE BACK



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Amid the furore about a certain film that's hitting screens in December, you could be forgiven for overlooking another epic underdog saga that's making its final bow in cinemas this year.

Having gone from starving hunter to revolution figurehead, Katniss Everdeen's journey will come full circle in *Mockingjay: Part 2*, the final instalment the *Hunger Games* series that has set imaginations on fire and turned Jennifer Lawrence into an icon. Strong, complex and flawed, yet utterly determined, she is a heroine for our time, and it's only fitting to have her on the cover as we usher out the era that she herself ushered in.

Accompanying this, we have interviews with not only Lawrence, but fellow stars Josh Hutcherson, Liam Hemsworth, Natalie Dormer and Sam Claflin, all of who give their thoughts on the end of the series and the legacy it's left behind. If it's going out, it's certainly not doing so without an almighty bang.

Also inside, we get the inside story on *Supergirl* from Kara Zor-El herself, Melissa Benoist, about how this exciting new take on the mythos will change the way we look at comic-book series – and make you smile a lot in the process. Reflecting back, we chat to the cast and crew of *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* in our complete guide, and present the case in favour of the unfairly maligned *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*.

Let's keep this fire burning.

Steve

Steve Wright
Deputy Editor

GET EXCITED ABOUT JESSICA JONES

Perhaps the ultimate post-modern superhero, *Jessica Jones* will see Marvel enter hitherto uncharted TV territory: that of the scarred, sceptical heroine, struggling to move on, let alone get by. Krysten Ritter looks the part as the protagonist, as does David Tennant as the brilliantly creepy-looking Killgrave. With more details about the *Luke Cage* series that will spin off out of it emerging by the second, we can't wait to see how this turns out.

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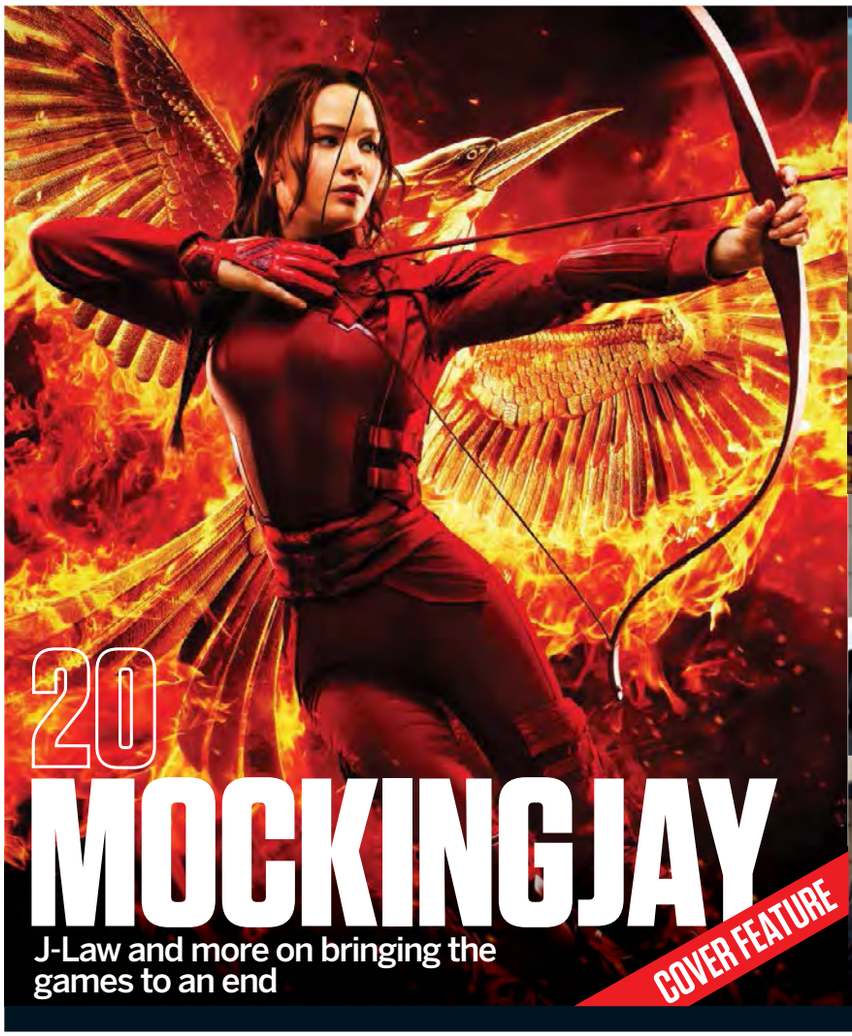

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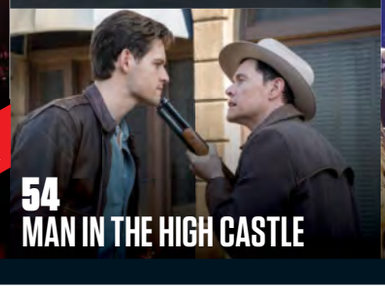

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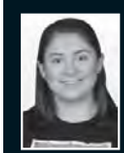
MEET THE TEAM

Q. What would be your weapon of choice in the Hunger Games arena?

James Hoare
Editor in Chief
A. Claw arm thing
One of those claws that old people use for reaching their slippers.

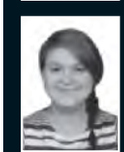
Steve Wright
Deputy Editor
A. Lightsaber
Can slice up career tributes *and* function as a handy barbecue.

Jonathan Hatfull
Features Editor
A. Gnomestick
They'd be wondering what it was as it smashed their faces.



Poppy-Jay Palmer
Senior Staff Writer
A. Pepper spray
Spray them, then kill them with whatever's around.

Marcus Faint
Art Editor
A. Laser pen
Assuming the other guys have sensitive eyes or are cats.



Jen Neal
Production Editor
A. Buffy's scythe
It's stylish and cuts people in half effortlessly.

Portal

Your esse ustworthy and unriva uide to th latest nings

LEGENDS OF TOMORROW: ATOM IS "ON HIS OWN JOURNEY"

Brandon Routh talks to us about cheating death and what to expect on DC's epic TV team-up

WORDS **EDWARD GROSS**

Considering his initial reluctance to return to the DC Universe to appear on *Arrow*, given his turn as the Man of Steel in 2006's *Superman Returns*, there's a certain irony in the fact that Brandon Routh will be leading a team of heroes in the upcoming *Legends Of Tomorrow*.

Irony, yes, but total surprise? No. "I didn't think it would happen in this way," admits Routh, whose character Ray Palmer/The Atom will be teaming up with the likes of Firestorm, the White Canary, Hawkman and Hawkgirl, Captain Cold, Rip Hunter and others. "I thought maybe it would truly be an Atom show or something like that, or I would go back and forth between *Arrow* and *The Flash*, or try to be on both shows at the same time. When I had my initial meeting, because they'd spun *The Flash* off of *Arrow*, they said, 'If you do this right, maybe there's something else down the road or we continue on these shows.' I said, 'If I like the character, I will be happy to be doing it in whatever capacity.'

"Well," he continues, "I love the character, so I'm happy to be doing it, and I think this is actually the best-case scenario. Having what is truly your own show is great, but it's a lot of work. I think this is perfect for me to share the screen with a lot of other very talented people. They keep building and bringing more new characters into *Arrow* and *Flash*, and then they will show up in our show."

Considering the success of the Atom and the big-screen able-to-shrink-to-microscopic-size *Ant-Man*, there seems to be a growing fascinating for characters with this unique ability. "With *Ant-Man*," muses Routh, "I don't know that bringing

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The first word on Season 2 of the award-winning French drama

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New cast member Kevin Carroll talks Season Two

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Sylvia Anderson on celebrating the show's 50th year

Atom onto the CW was in response to that in any way or not, or if it's just a happy coincidence in one way to have two of these characters coming to life at the same time. It's unique, and it's something we really haven't seen before. We're going to do all kinds of fun things with the shape-changing and how a fight unfolds and how Ray can change the course of a battle as the season and years progress."

The actor admits that despite his success in the genre, he was not much of a comic-book fan growing up, mostly because he wasn't exposed to them.

"My parents," he says, "didn't read comics, and I didn't have friends who did. I collected a couple of *Archie* comics and then I spun into the *Archie* version of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. I collected football cards mostly as a kid. My geek went to fantasy novels and fantasy video games. Things like Robert Jordan, Terry Goodkind, Terry Brooks. Those authors were my fascination."

Playing Superman did instil an appreciation in him for the DC Universe. "I definitely was a big *Superman* fan from Christopher Reeve's movies," Routh details. "The nature of DC Comics seems to be a little bit more inherently brighter, shinier, optimistic view about life. *Batman* is a little bit different, but that's what always appealed to me. That's the core of Superman for me."

> "IT'S UNIQUE AND SOMETHING WE REALLY HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE. WE'RE GOING TO DO ALL KINDS OF FUN THINGS"
> BRANDON ROUTH

Most intriguing to him about *Legends Of Tomorrow* is the fact that he'll be in something of a leadership role, and that he will have evolved as a hero compared to the moments he'd first gone up against Stephen Amell's Oliver Queen.

"I think he knows a little bit more of what it's like to be a hero in his few adventures since his first encounter with Oliver," Routh laughs. "He's learned that it takes more than just brains and a suit. You have to have a little bit of strategy and actually know a little bit of physical prowess in knowing how to fight. The journey that he's been on leading up to *Legends* will be interesting, though I'm not exactly sure what it is. He's been on his own journey as a very small person. I don't know what that back story is going to be, although I think that will come to light and will play into who he is when he comes back to full height."

Legends Of Tomorrow will air on The CW in the US in January 2016, with a UK air date to follow.

Captain Cold and Heat Wave return after guest appearances on *The Flash*.

Martin Stein is back as one half of Firestorm – but where's Ronnie Raymond?

We got our first glimpse of Hawkgirl in *The Flash* finale.

Just how geeky are our favourite sci-fi stars?

GEEK-O-METER

> "THE IDEA EXCITED ME. I THOUGHT NARCOPOLIS WAS A VERY INTERESTING VISION OF THE FUTURE"
> JAMES CALLIS

JAMES CALLIS

81 TOTAL GEEK RATING

TIME TRAVEL

James Callis is making a sci-fi comeback this year in Justin Tregarne's stylish drugs mystery *Narcopolis*. But this time he's the bad guy, a business man and drug dealer called Todd Ambro, who has the whole of Britain eating out of his hand. "It's really clever," he says. "You think the film is about one thing when in fact it's actually about something else. The whole idea – everything about it – excited me. I thought it was a very interesting vision of the future."

14/20

GEEK CRED

Callis made his name in sci-fi playing Dr Gaius Baltar in the 2004 reboot of *Battlestar Galactica*. Callis still gets fans asking him about the ending. "It's like a badge of honour to be associated with it," he tells us. "The real heroes and the people everybody should be speaking to are the writers, directors and post-production supervisors. The writers are equally if not more fascinating, and don't get to answer those questions about things that they wrote!"

18/20

COMMITMENT

As an actor, Callis often finds himself time-hopping. From playing a drug tycoon in futuristic *Narcopolis* to a first-century rule in *AD: The Bible Continues*, he's embodied characters throughout history. "It's such a privilege. Part of the job is you're going from one world to another, and a whole different set of circumstances and a whole different set of people, and a whole different line of storytelling," he says. "That is truly exciting. You get to play, essentially."

17/20

FAN POWER

"Until the first season [of *Battlestar Galactica*] had aired, I kind of felt like we were doing it for ourselves," he says. "You don't know things are going to be such a cult phenomenon. That was exactly my experience, meeting people at conventions who are still very much excited and wearing costumes from the show, and then you meet people who have just finished watching it who didn't watch it at the time. This is happening all the time, and I'm just blown away."

16/20

COSPLAY

Callis meets a lot of fans in full *Battlestar* cosplay. But what would he dress up as if attending a con incognito? "The most important thing is that you can breathe in it and it's not so elaborate that actually you need a special handler to get through a doorway. Maybe something that is low maintenance, but also equally disguising. The work that goes into these things is incredible. Maybe the best way would be body paint so that there's no costume and some kind of mask…"

16/20

Narcopolis is in out in cinemas worldwide now.

Bojana Novakovic stars as one half of a terrorised couple in *The Hallow*.

"IT'S STRAW DOGS MEETS PAN'S LABYRINTH!"

Corin Hardy on making fairy tales scary in The Hallow

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

Traditionally, fairies don't tend to cross into creature features – at least not good ones – so Corin Hardy's creepy, thrilling Irish horror *The Hallow* stands out. "My original pitch was *Straw Dogs* meets *Pan's Labyrinth*, as in a fairy tale brought to life in a reality that was terrifying," Hardy tells us. "The inspiration was wanting to tell a tale with new monsters, and in a lot of the original old Irish mythology, fairies aren't necessarily friendly Tinkerbells."

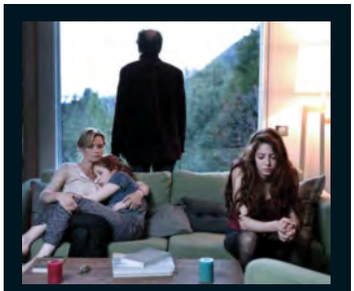
The film stars Joseph Mawle and Bojana Novakovic as a couple who move to the Irish woods with their baby, and quickly find it's not just the unhappy locals they need to be afraid of. "Finding a way that the fantasy and mythology side could fit into a reality was the challenge," remembers Hardy. "Setting out to make a horror movie that was as fresh and beautiful as it could be within the limitations of the kind of movie it was."

A big part of the film's success is down to the excellent effects, and Hardy tells us that he was determined to deliver monsters that felt real. "It wasn't just a nostalgic thing; it's also a belief that you can achieve something that can possibly be more terrifying, feel more real and grounded," he enthuses.

His instincts have proven to be correct, as the reaction from the festivals has been rapturous and propelled him to the director's chair on the remake of *The Crow*. "When you make a film you really want the audience that you [made it for] to like it, to like it!" he laughs. "I wanted to make a creature feature, a horror movie that was honest in its own ambitions and I wanted it to be scary enough. So it's really heartening to know that people are finding it scary and a bit of a thrill ride."

The Hallow will be released in UK cinemas on 12 November.

Joseph Mawle has an utterly terrible time.



BACK FROM THE DEAD

Why The Returned: Season 2 is worth the wait

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

Few shows cross over like French supernatural drama *The Returned*. Not only were people watching a series about the undead, they were watching a show with subtitles at 9pm on a school night. The 2012 first season aired through June and July 2013 in the UK, a second series was confirmed, and then... then we waited.

"It was a shame!" laughs co-writer Audrey Fouchet. "We started to write Season Two just after we finished Season One, but it took a long time," explains series creator Fabrice Gobert. "We focused on doing the best scripts." "The most important thing for us was for [it] to be even better than Season One, not to be six months early," adds producer Jimmy Desmarais.

Season Two picks up six months after the events of the first season, when the newly living dead came to claim the returned who had tried to stay. Those who took refuge in the Helping Hand shelter survived the flood, something the military is doing their best to explain. Meanwhile, those who went with the returned have problems of their own.

"They have been through hell," enthuses producer Caroline Benjo. "For six months they were waiting, which you can imagine was kind of a nightmare. They are darker, and they look older too. In terms of special effects, the narration, storytelling, I think it's richer in this season."

Season Two of *The Returned* is now airing on Channel 4.

GHOSTBUSTERS 3:
5 REASONS WHY THE HATERS ARE WRONG

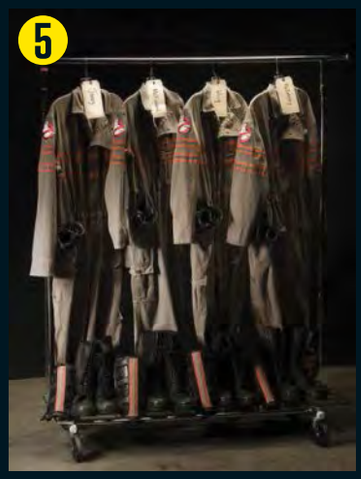
Stop complaining about reboots, remakes, sequels and all-lady casts, and start being excited about new Ghostbusters adventures!

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

Critics should definitely cut the cast of Paul Feig's *Ghostbusters* movie some slack.

For many, just the thought of a *Ghostbusters* revival is enough to send them into an excitement-fuelled swoon. For others, it's utter blasphemy. But what exactly are these fellows against? Reboots? Women? Joy? Several years after the initial *Ghostbusters 3* announcement, we still find ourselves with a need to convince the more sceptical that all-new, all-female Ghostbusters are something that we need in our lives. Instead of asking 'why', start asking 'why not' and 'why won't it come out sooner?' Here's why we think we should all join hands and start wishing for July to hurry up already…

Feig has took to Twitter to release various snaps from the film's set.



1 It's got a fab cast

Kristin Wiig. Melissa McCarthy. Kate McKinnon. Leslie Jones. They aren't just some of the funniest women working today; they're some of the funniest people. Wiig and McCarthy have already hit the comedy big-time with movies like *Bridesmaids* and *Spy*, but McKinnon and Jones are slightly less well known. As cast members of *Saturday Night Live* they are still in the prime of their comedy careers. Maybe *Ghostbusters* will make them both household names. Maybe they'll get to write and star in their own big-budget Hollywood comedies. Maybe they'll end up presenting the Golden Globes together. We're already excited to see what happens to them post-busting. Also, Cecily Strong? Chris Hemsworth as a receptionist? Andy Garcia as the mayor? Amazing.

2 It's got cameos from the original cast

Bill Murray. Dan Aykroyd. Ernie Hudson. Sigourney Weaver. Annie Potts. That's, like, everyone from the original *Ghostbusters* (bar Harold Ramis, rest in peace). It also has Murray, Aykroyd, Hudson, Weaver and Potts's support. What more could you want? This is like Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill and Carrie Fisher coming back for *The Force Awakens* all over again. This reunion is kind of a big deal. To be fair, Ernie Hudson wasn't that on board when the film started casting (he previously told the *Telegraph* that an all-female *Ghostbusters* "would be a bad idea"), but we're guessing his involvement means he changed his mind. Maybe he read the script and was blown away. Maybe he just didn't want to be the odd one out. Who knows?

3 It's got an bitchin' director

With feature films like *Spy*, *The Heat* and *Bridesmaid* (all of which starred Melissa McCarthy) under his comedy belt, as well as episodes of *Arrested Development*, *Parks And Recreation* and *The Office*, Paul Feig is more than qualified for the job. He also created *Freaks And Geeks*, just in case the rest of his credentials weren't enough to convince you. We're confident he will bring the funny. That's all we want: it needs to be funny (and spooky and cool). Feig even has previous experience with the supernatural after playing Mr Pool in *Sabrina The Teenage Witch* from 1996 to 1997. He's practically perfect in every way.

4 The early set pictures are marvellous

Did you get a look at the Ecto-1 and the brand new jumpsuits? Did you see Kate McKinnon's yellow-tinted science specs, her one stripy sock and paint-splattered dungarees? Did you see that photo of the cast and crew's girl power? You did? Then why are you still being a grump about it all? And it's not just pictures from the set. Wiig, McCarthy, McKinnon and Jones donned their costumes to goof around with patients at a children's hospital too. Everyone had a great time. It was adorable. If that doesn't warm your heart then you're probably a ghost yourself.

5 More Ghostbusting

If you oppose more Ghostbusting then you oppose fun. That's just how it works. Turn that frown upside down, and join the rest of us in being ecstatic. Bustin' makes us feel good.

Ghostbusters will be released in cinemas on 15 July 2016.

FIVE THINGS WITH ROSE LESLIE

Vin Diesel's co-star on playing a good witch and her catchphrase

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

1 The hunt is on

Rose Leslie secured her place in nerd culture while playing Ygritte in *Game Of Thrones*, and now she's a part of Vin Diesel's fantasy action blockbuster *The Last Witch Hunter*, in which the *Fast & Furious* star plays Kaulder, an immortal warrior hunting witches through the centuries. "I thought that it was a brilliant concept. It takes on a whole new mythology whereby witches and humans live among each other, and the humans are completely oblivious to the witchcraft that's surrounding them in their world," enthuses Leslie.

2 Witch-crafting

Leslie plays Chloe, a good witch who joins Kaulder in his fight against the rising darkness. "Chloe isn't a stereotypical female role in that she's not necessarily the sexualised female other half," Leslie explains. "Her character is more than a match for Kaulder; she is strong and self-reliant, and had to grow up rather fierce. It was a good platform to start with a female role… she packs a punch. From our childhood I remember witches having this malevolent hold on us, but she's very good."

3 More sorcery, less swords

Despite starring alongside one of the world's biggest action-movie stars, Leslie tells us that the distribution of fight sequences wasn't quite even. "Oh god, I wish I was given more!" she laughs. "Chloe is a dreamwalker, which means that she has the ability to enter other people's minds and manipulate their thoughts and actions. So it was less kicking and throwing swords, which is fine. I got a kick here and there, so I was rather happy." She was also unable to match Diesel's *Dungeons & Dragons* knowledge. "I couldn't really have any conversation with him about *D&D*, because I was unable to keep up!"

4 Cult favourite

Leslie has become a firm genre favourite, following *Game Of Thrones* with roles in much-missed C4 drama *Utopia* and excellent indie horror *Honeymoon*, and we wonder if she feels the urge to change it up. "I have a love for this particular genre now, it's really exciting," she explains. "I respond to writing and I definitely respond to backbone. Bloody hell, I would have done *Utopia* for free, I was so willing to be a part of that. It's about jobs that excite you. I'm not yet feeling the itch for a corset, but you never know."

5 You know nothing…

"I am very, very honoured to have a catchphrase!" laughs Leslie when we bring up 'that' famous line from *Game Of Thrones*. "That is a lovely thing, I don't think I'll ever get bored of that. I was unaware of just passionate so many people are and what a global phenomenon [*Game Of Thrones*] would go on to be. The beautiful thing is that a lot of the fans that have come up to me and expressed their love for the show have only ever been grinning from ear to ear. They want to immerse themselves into that world every year."

The Last Witch Hunter is in cinemas now.

> "I AM VERY, VERY HONOURED TO HAVE A CATCHPHRASE… I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER GET BORED OF THAT"
> ROSE LESLIE

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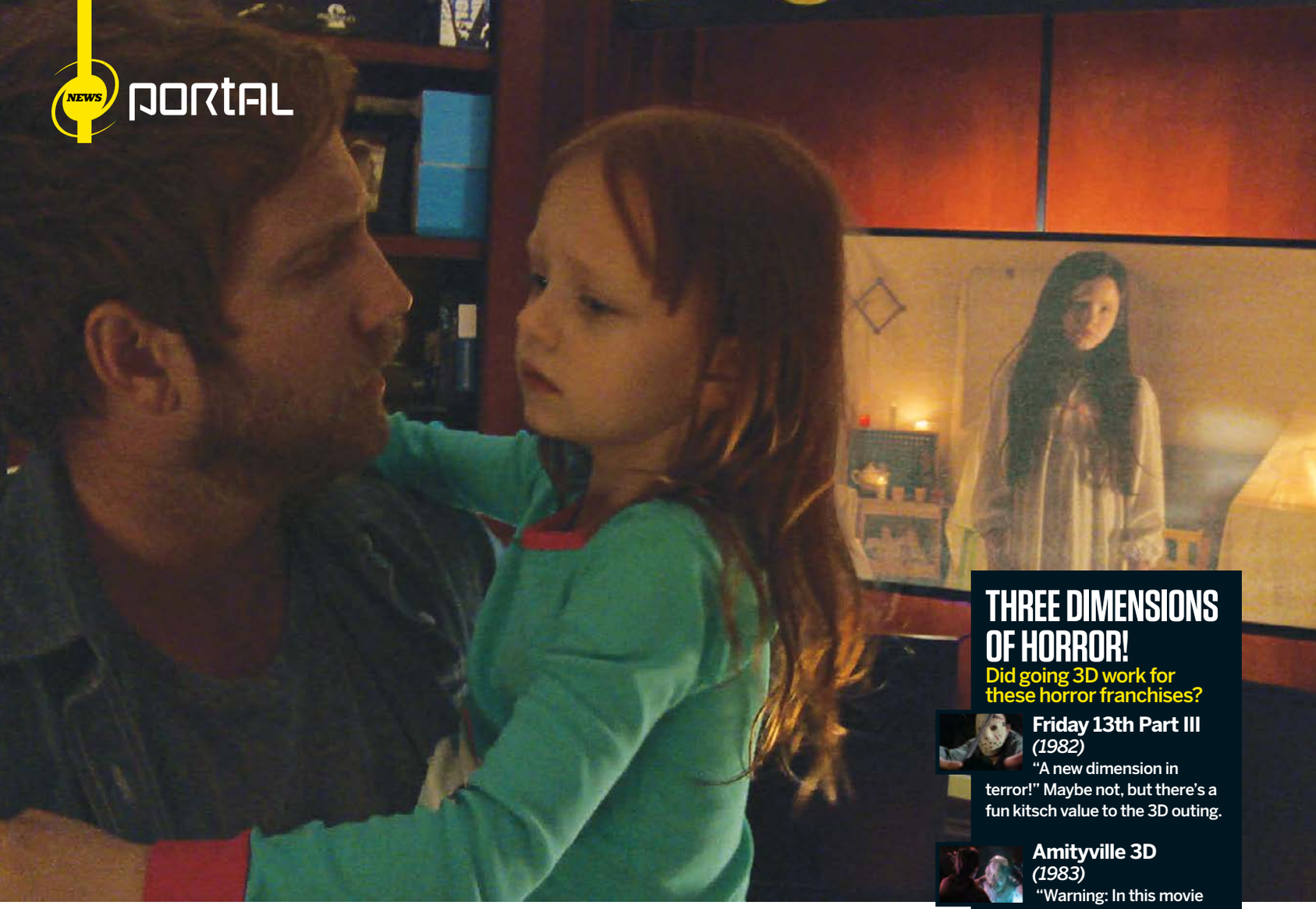


"IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER FRANCHISE TO TAKE OVER"

Jason Blum on why fans will love Paranormal Activity 6

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

All horror film franchises come to an end eventually (until the remake), and the time has come for Blumhouse's *Paranormal Activity* series to deliver its final scares and give fans the answers to the questions asked by the last five films. For producer and Blumhouse head honcho Jason Blum, the pressure's on to deliver a fitting finale to one of the most influential modern horror franchises.

"I always feel pressure before a movie comes out," he tells us. "Obviously, I want it to be financially successful, but it's also very important to me that the fans feel like it ended on a high note. We spent a lot of time with multiple writers trying to get the answers to be right and satisfying."

Paranormal Activity: The Ghost Dimension will be juggling quite a lot, as it will be concluding the series, offering the scares that fans have come to expect, and giving us something completely new for the saga: a third dimension. "It's definitely scary in its own right, but it also has a lot of answers, and it's also the most unique of all the six movies, largely because of the 3D," enthuses Blum. "In the ghost dimension, the 3D aspect of the movie ties directly into the creative of the movie, which I think makes the 3D feel more organic to the storytelling."

The 3D did provide challenges to the established Blumhouse moviemaking model, however. "It makes the production much less nimble," Blum explains. "It's just much more time-consuming. It's the first movie that our company's ever done in 3D, and it was the first for a lot of us."

Over the last few years, Blum has become one of the most prolific producers of indie horror, and *Paranormal Activity* is where it all started. We all remember the buzz around that first movie, and its nearly $200 million box office from a $15,000 budget kick-started a wave of imitators, as well as the production company's ever-expanding slate of movies.

"I've been thinking a lot about making all six movies, and it does make me nostalgic and kind of sad," Blumhouse tells us. "Definitely the best moment was when Steven Spielberg saw the first movie. That was probably the highlight of the whole thing; it was so cool that happened. I feel really good about it, it's been a great journey, but I also feel like it's time for a new one; time for another franchise to take over."

Paranormal Activity: The Ghost Dimension will be released in cinemas on 23 October.

THREE DIMENSIONS OF HORROR!

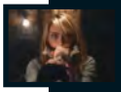
Did going 3D work for these horror franchises?

Friday 13th Part III *(1982)*
"A new dimension in terror!" Maybe not, but there's a fun kitsch value to the 3D outing.

Amityville 3D *(1983)*
"Warning: In this movie you are the victim." This was very true. No one liked this movie. Audiences. Critics. No one.

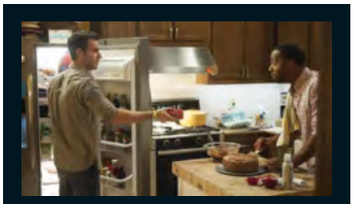
Jaws 3D *(1983)*
"The third dimension is terror." Terror was not happening at all, but "The third dimension is giggling" doesn't sound as good.

Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare *(1991)*
"They saved the best for last." This is in no way accurate. Maybe they are just referring to the 3D?



My Bloody Valentine *(2009)*
"Nothing says 'date movie' like a 3D ride to hell!" Actually, this remake is fun and the 3D was genuinely great.

Saw: The Final Chapter *(2010)*
"The traps come alive." Well, fine, but the final *Saw* was still a rushed, nasty mess.



DO YOU BELIEVE IN MIRACLE?

What we can expect next on The Leftovers

WORDS **STEVE WRIGHT**

Having exhausted its source material – Tom Perrotta's novel – Season Two of *The Leftovers* will see Kevin Garvey (Justin Theroux) relocate, along with new partner Nora (Carrie Coon) and daughter Jill (Margaret Qualley) to the ominously named town of Miracle, a place apparently unaffected by the Rapture that destroyed most of the lead characters' lives.

"It's expanded the conversation," says Kevin Carroll, who joins the cast this season as John Murphy, head of the welcome committee. "It's going to look and feel different, but the creative team are pretty great in that they hang on to some of the same things from the first season. We have more people and the episodes are going to look and feel different, because of the nature of the move, bringing the Garveys, who are trying to escape where they're coming from. We're going to put them in a new setting."

It's inevitable that things will go wrong. The show garnered a reputation for being one of the bleakest things on television. While it won't be as relentless this time around, don't expect it to lighten up any time soon. "There are lighter moments in this, and they're very human," says Carroll. "There's small nuances and characters that I find are funny and that are definitely lighter. It's not going to turn into a comedy obviously, but comparatively I think this season... I wouldn't say lighter, but there's a different tone to this season."

The Leftovers: Season Two is airing now on Sky Atlantic.

***The Good Dinosaur* presents Pixar's own take on the boy-and-his-dog story.**

ONE BOY AND HIS DINO

Story supervisor Kelsey Mann talks Pixar's latest showstopper, The Good Dinosaur

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

When Pixar's latest adventure *The Good Dinosaur* was still in its early stages, the team behind it knew they wanted to have a go at telling a coming-of-age story about a boy and his dog. But as usual, they decided to mix it up a bit. In their version, the boy is a young Apatosaurus named Arlo, and his dog is a human boy named Spot.

"We wanted [Arlo] to go out and have this kind of vision quest," says Kelsey Mann, the film's story supervisor. "We looked at a lot of cultures that have this thing where the boys are sent out into the woods when they reach a certain age. Like, here's a stick: come back in a week! Come back a man! And so we thought we could do that with Arlo, except it's not a planned thing. It's more by accident. He's forced into this situation. We thought it would be really great for him to look to a character to support him.

"This often happens in boy-and-dog stories. The boy has some sort of event that he needs healing from, and the dog enters the boy's life and helps him deal with that, so we always knew that Arlo and Spot would have that relationship. We thought it would be equally interesting to have this huge dinosaur be the one ill-equipped to survive out in the wilderness, and then a tiny little boy who you'd think would be the most vulnerable, but he is the more tenacious. He looks to Spot for guidance and how to survive in this world."

Like with every Pixar project, the film went through years of development. The story constantly changed, but unpredictability was something Mann found helpful and exciting.

"What I love about working here at Pixar is that we never settle for something that's okay," he tells us. "We always want it to be great. Pete Sohn, our director, he'd always say, 'I want to get that A plus, I want to get that A plus!' To get that A plus, you have to go through a lot of changes, and when you're working in story that is your life. Your life is reworking something, but it's always in the vein of improving the movie. Our drawings get cut left and right, but it's because we have another idea that will improve on the previous idea. Usually you're excited! Usually you're like, 'Yeah! That's a much better idea! I want to try that!'"

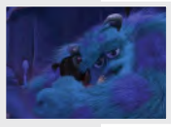
The Good Dinosaur will be released in UK cinemas on 27 November.

YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND IN ME...

Pixar is a champion of best friendships. Here are the sweetest ones. Aww...

Sully and Boo

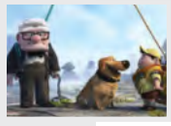
Monsters Inc (2001)



Sully became Boo's best friend and surrogate dad when she accidentally wandered into the monster realm.

Russell and Dug

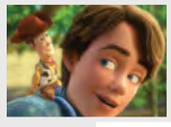
Up (2009)



Literally a boy and his dog. Well, not really his dog. A dog he found on Carl's porch that could sort of speak human.

Andy and Woody

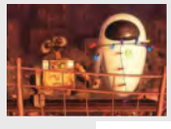
Toy Story 1-3 (1995-2010)



One was made of plastic, the other flesh, but that didn't stop Andy and Woody from being inseparable.

Wall-E and Eve

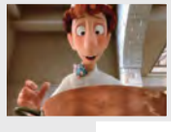
Wall-E (2008)



They didn't speak each other's language, but trash-bot Wall-E and high-tech Eve found other ways of communicating.

Linguini and Remy

Ratatouille (2007)



As human and rat friendships go, this was unique. They wanted a friend with their success.

> "WE HAD A MARVELLOUS TEAM OF PEOPLE WORKING FOR US. WE OWE A LOT OF OUR SUCCESS TO THESE PEOPLE"
> SYLVIA ANDERSON

THUNDERBIRDS GO 50

Sylvia Anderson and Parker actor David Graham on a celebrating International Rescue's half-century anniversary

WORDS **STEVE WRIGHT**

This year, fans worldwide are celebrating the 50th anniversary of Gerry and Sylvia Anderson's *Thunderbirds*, the show that gave us a whole range of national icons, from the crew of International Rescue to the legendary double act of Lady Penelope and Parker.

"It's just amazing," said David Graham – the voice of Parker – on the show's enduring success. "I had done four series before *Thunderbirds*, and we knew that we were probably onto something, but we had no idea that 50 years later it would be so iconic, and that I created one of the most famous voices in television. It was just part of the job, but I'm grateful for the fame it has achieved over the years."

Like all classic shows, *Thunderbirds* is utterly timeless. People young and old took it to their hearts, and as a result it has never died. Sylvia Anderson, the show's co-creator and voice of Lady Penelope, points towards the talented, dedicated team they had working with them as the reason for the show's enduring appeal.

"We had a marvellous team of people working for us," she recalls. "We owe a lot of our success to these people we had as a team. I never forget them, and I always mention them, because they really are a great part of our success. When we were making the programs, we were making them as if they were in the future. So our team of special effects people took what they thought it would be like in 50 years time, and some of it's pretty accurate. We never filmed in the present. That way we were ahead of ourselves. I think that was one of our secrets."

As if to highlight their penchant for sticking to a winning formula, this year will see three all-new episodes released, based on existing audio recordings but with the addition of contemporary sound effects. Funded on Kickstarter, fans

Fans worldwide still celebrate the exploits of Lady Penelope and Parker.

The puppet for Penelope was modelled on voice actress/ creator Sylvia's own likeness.

After a Kickstarter campaign, the original series will return for three all-new episodes.

CGI animated show *Thunderbirds Are Go!* is returning for a second series.

worldwide contributed over £150,000 to the project – which Graham seems delighted to be coming back to.

"It just proves what undying love there is for the series," he says. "I just count myself lucky. In this business there's huge competition. You need that bit of fortune, and I realised that bit of fortune when I worked with Gerry and met Sylvia and Gerry. It was just incredible."

A further mark of the show's endurance is that people continually attempt to make new versions of it. While the 2004 live-action film fared poorly both critically and at the box office, recent CGI-animated series *Thunderbirds Are Go!* has received a much better reception, displaying a lot of love for the original series. Graham has reprised his role ("Fortunately, my voice has more or less stayed the same!"), and Anderson is flattered at the imitators. "I've always been helpful, because I feel it's a great compliment that people want to do something based on what we did years ago."

With a second series of *Thunderbirds Are Go!* currently being made, Graham will be reprising his role as Parker again, and Sylvia is making a cameo. "I've just done a guest recording," she says. "It was quite fun going to a studio and voicing another character. I asked, 'Who am I going to voice – Lady Penelope's grandmother?' And they said, 'No, a dotty aunt.' And I said, 'Right, I'll do it!'

Clearly, *Thunderbirds* has a bright future. It has been around for 50 years, and we're sure it'll still be remembered in another 50. Sylvia looks back on that time with fondness. "We worked so hard; in each episode we tried to improve on the last. So we had support – not much money, I hasten to add – but we took out a deserted factory and made it into our own studio. What I was delighted about is I was able to take people from art school, people who were very clever, but hadn't had an opportunity, so it was just a wonderful atmosphere. They call me still, and I'm still in touch with them, just as if it was yesterday. So that's quite magic."

Season Two of *Thunderbirds Are Go!* will air later in the year.

AND THERE'S MORE...

The box sets that Anderson devotees must own

Thunderbirds: 50th Anniversary Collection
Distributor: ITV Studios Home Entertainment
Price: £39.99

Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons: The Complete Collection
Distributor: ITV Studios Home Entertainment
Price: £34.99

Stingray: The Complete Collection
Distributor: ITV Studios Home Entertainment
Price: £34.99

SMALLVILLE: THE COMPLETE MANUAL

The 100% unofficial guide to Superman's beginnings

From the creators of **SciFiNow** comes our latest **Complete Manual**, telling the story of the show that shed light on the early years of the greatest superhero of them all: *Smallville*.

Find out exactly what the Kal-El it's all about with a look at the series, including exclusive interviews with the cast and crew. From producer Al Gough to Lois Lane herself, Erica Durance, we have all the insight you need.

But that's not all. We look at the later incarnations of the character, from his early years up to Zack Snyder's *Man Of Steel*, plot the timeline of Clark Kent, scour *Smallville* to pay respects to the best ever episodes, and discover life after the TV show via the Season 11 comic-book.

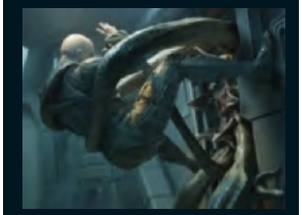
We've also thrown a few **SciFiNow** regulars into the mix, including our quiz and the Complete Guide to Superman.

Fantasy and sci-fi fans can also get their hands on Complete Manuals to *Harry Potter*, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Stargate*, *Firefly*, *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*, as well as a whole range of horror eBooks, including guides to Stephen King, Slasher Movies, Hammer and Kaiju Horror and more!

Smallville: The Complete Manual is available for £2.29 from **GreatDigitalMags.com**.

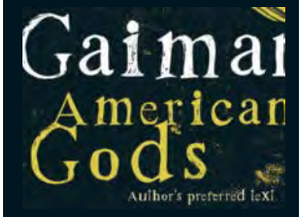
HOT TOPICS

Your most-read posts on SciFiNow.co.uk



PROMETHEUS 2 IS NOW ALIEN: PARADISE LOST
tinyurl.com/ob465up

TALES OF HALLOWEEN IS "WHAT HALLOWEEN'S ABOUT!"
tinyurl.com/p4weoxe



AMERICAN GODS TV SERIES BRINGS IN HANNIBAL DIRECTOR
tinyurl.com/nnq6pes

MAD MAX: FURY ROAD: THE DOOF WARRIOR SPEAKS
tinyurl.com/op885gj

UNDERWORLD 5 CASTS MERLIN STAR AS MALE VILLAIN
tinyurl.com/ovfzkzj

COSPLAY OF THE MONTH

Send your cosplay to @SciFiNow or Facebook.com/SciFiNow

COLONIAL MARINE (ALIENS)

COSPLAYER: AARON DARLINGTON **FROM:** BOURNEMOUTH **PHOTOGRAPHER:** JAMES SHEPPARD

1 THE CHARACTER

The colonial marines in *Aliens* have always been some of my favourite sci-fi characters. The look of the armour, weaponry, gadgets and the actors' performances left a lasting impression on me. After meeting Michael Biehn (who played Hicks) at London Film and Comic Con, my friend and I talked about how awesome it would be to put a Colonial Marine costume together. That conversation continued to crop up over the coming weeks, and it wasn't long until I started sourcing parts and reference material.

2 THE COSTUME

I make prop replicas and model kits in my spare time, but had never undertaken anything this ambitious. The more I researched and planned, the more details I noticed, and the more I wanted to strive for accuracy. I bought the armour kit and BDUs from a UK-based seller, and spent months tracking down original vintage and replica parts online. I studied dozens of images to replicate the pattern on the armour, which was the most time-consuming part of the build, as it was all done by hand – just like the originals.

3 THE DESIGN

My armour is based on the costume worn by Bill Paxton, who played Hudson in the movie. Last year, I had the opportunity to take photos of the original armour. Those photos helped me to recreate some of the more intricate details, such as the idiosyncratic graffiti that the actors had been allowed to create. I was then able to adapt certain elements to make them more personal to me, such as my surname instead of Hudson's, and nods to my grandfathers, both of who served in the military.

4 THE ACCESSORIES

A great number of the accessories are available as resin kits. If you're lucky, you can sometimes find an original part online, other times you need to make it by hand. For example, the Gerber knife sheath that is strapped to my bandoliers is not an original, but was painstakingly recreated by my father. I searched countless military surplus stores looking for suitable clips and pouches – and spent the best part of a year painting, drilling and riveting components until the whole thing came together.

TRIVIA THE SCENE IN WHICH WE FIRST MEET THE MARINES IN *ALIENS* WAS ONE OF THE LAST TO BE FILMED.

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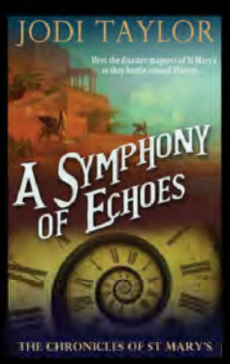

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CAPITOL

PUNISHMENT

IT STARTED WITH A SPARK. IT WILL END WITH AN INFERNO. LOCK UP YOUR DICTATORS; KATNISS IS BACK. WE TALK TO THE CAST AND CREW ABOUT MOCKINGJAY PART 2...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**
INTERVIEWS **POPPY-JAY PALMER, JULIDE TANRIVERDI**

When Katniss Everdeen volunteered for her sister at the 74th Hunger Games Reaping, she knew her life would change forever. What she didn't anticipate was that she'd change the lives of the whole of Panem. Since then, she has killed, faked a marriage, faked a pregnancy, sparked a rebellion and, in President Snow's eyes, become the most dangerous woman in the world.

Returning to follow Katniss to victory for *Mockingjay - Part 2* are her loyal friends, her arena allies and her propaganda team, including Peeta Mellark (Josh Hutcherson), Gale Hawthorne (Liam Hemsworth), Finnick ⇨

Odair (Sam Claflin), and propo director Cressida (Natalie Dormer). Threats have been made. Blood has been spilt. We've almost reached the end of Katniss's struggle against Snow.

Dormer believes that Katniss and *The Hunger Games* have also come a long way for teenage girls, women, and the film industry as a whole over the last four years. "Some men have a misconception that female empowerment has to have a sexual [element] to it," she explains. "It has to be the sexy ninja in her tight leather pants or whatever. There's a place for that in the entertainment industry, of course there is. But Katniss Everdeen is a role model because she's a real human being. She's a real teenage girl with flaws and foibles and unsavoury parts of her character. She's the reluctant heroine, the reluctant hero. And so that means it's accessible to young women, and importantly for the guys in Hollywood who finance movies, it's proven itself through breaking records to be incredibly economically viable. So as soon as they understand that storytelling like this is commercially viable, then hopefully we will get more roles and more characters like Katniss Everdeen."

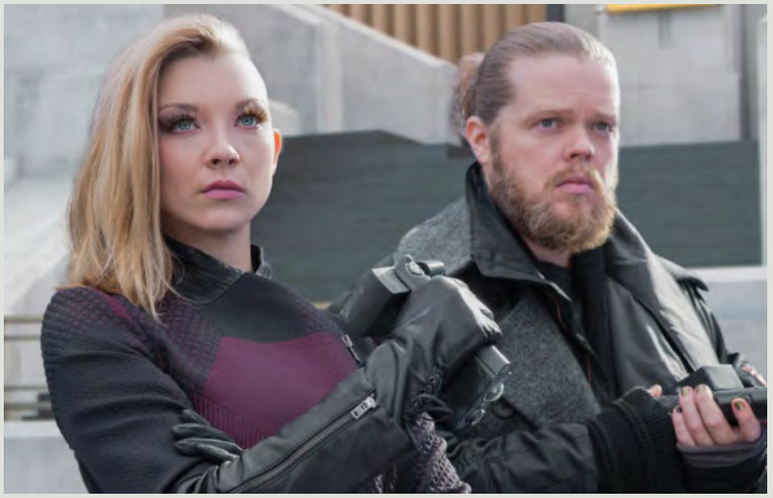
Does that mean we can count *The Hunger Games* amongst the few Hollywood-produced feminist franchises? "I think 'feminist franchise' is giving it a mantle… If your understanding of 'feminist' is just pure equality then of course it is," Dormer tells us. "But sometimes that word scares people off. It's a very human story, and it's wonderfully irrelevant that the lead protagonist happens to be female as opposed to male. That's what I love about *The Hunger Games*. Characters like President Coin (Julianne Moore) or Cressida could very easily have been played by men. They could very easily have been male characters. [Author] Suzanne Collins decided to make them female, but they're not defined by their gender. They are defined by their beliefs or their job, and that's what I think we are ultimately looking for in the future. That's when you know you've got real equality."

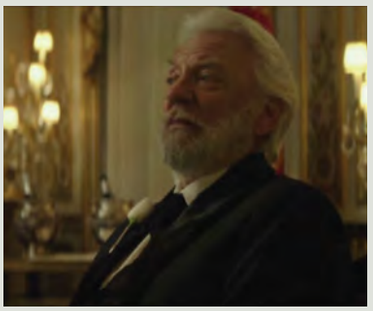
"I would hope that there are more opportunities for women," contributes Lawrence. "I was having a conversation with somebody about the struggles of the kind of weight on the industry, because I know that that's something I talk non-stop about, and they said, but all of the main movie stars aren't really underweight. All of you guys – and I said, 'Well, yeah, because once you get to a certain place people will hire you and they just want you to be in the movie, so they don't care.' It's more of a struggle for the actors and actresses who have not made it to a certain place where they're hired for all kinds of roles, no matter what, and there's a lot of pressure. And I feel like I'm not really at a place where I could complain or speak about it, because I'm not getting enough roles. I am very lucky and I have a lot of opportunities. I would be interested to hear someone who is *not* in two franchises answer that question."

> "THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING A WARRIOR AND BEING A SYMBOL OF A REVOLUTION"
>
> **JENNIFER LAWRENCE**

For fans, it's been fascinating watching Katniss transform from a vulnerable teenager living in extreme poverty into a Victor and a symbol of hope and rebellion. "At the beginning of Katniss's story, she was trying to save her sister and she was trying to save herself, and then Peeta and waking up at District 13 changed things," says Lawrence. "Losing Peeta changed things, and I believe that she kind of grows into her position and takes control of her destiny and the revolution, because it was a growing, developing thing. She was a young girl and was just trying to survive, and was scared and I don't think that she really wanted it. I think that it was something that I really loved about the second movie. That's when she takes power and decides that she does believe in this cause."

"Also, there's a difference between being a warrior and being a symbol of a revolution, that character that wants





to take action and do what needs to be done," says Nina Jacobson, the producer of all four films. "I think she might be willing to give up the Mockingjay, but not give up the revolutionary. I think also that once you disrupt the story the establishment wants to tell, anything can happen, and change becomes possible if people are brave enough to pursue it. The Capitol has complete control over the media in the first movie. Katniss begins to break that at the end of the first movie, and over the course of this revolution. Who is in charge of the media and what they do with it becomes enormously important to the outcome. And it is only through the pursuit of truth and just the defiance of the system that our characters ultimately do create change."

"I'm a fan of sci-fi and fantasy when it is done in such a way that informs our modern world," says Dormer. "You know, you only have to look at the images from what's going on in the news at the moment to see displacement of refugees and people repressed by their governments and chasms between those who have and those who have not. That's what is so strong about *The Hunger Games*. It explores consequences of war and all those darker human traits that it deals with in the real world."

Katniss isn't the only character who has been undergoing drastic changes since day one. A revolution is a team effort, after all. As one of Katniss's most trusted allies and sometimes-love-interest, Gale Hawthorne (Liam Hemsworth) has been through some pretty intense stuff himself.

"Gale is sort of right where he wants to be right now," Hemsworth tells us. "He's an emotional, strong-willed, independent, angry young man. Little things have happened to him that have made him feel the way he feels and his biggest motivation is to take down the Capitol. That's all he's really thinking about, and I think his focus becomes less about Katniss and more about winning this war. And he's a little bit of a ticking time bomb in a way, I guess, because he sees red. There's quite a disagreement in opinions between Katniss and Gale on this one, because they have very different views about what's acceptable and what's right and wrong. And he's sort of willing to do anything to end this problem. But it was definitely a great kind of journey to take after the last few movies of really sitting on its outliers and sort of having to watch it all happen. Now, this is his chance to get in and get back at it all."

Likewise, Peeta (Josh Hutcherson) is set to level back up after being held captive and tortured at the Capitol's Tribute Centre since the events of *Catching Fire*'s surprising finale. Brainwashed into nearly killing Katniss at the climax of *Part 1*, by the start of the sequel he still hasn't quite recovered.

"For me, I was really attracted to Peeta throughout the story, and I think he starts as more quiet and not so secure in himself," says Hutcherson. "He has a hard opinion on life and everything, and once he kind of confesses his love for Katniss he empowers himself in a way. And then, in *Mockingjay Part 1*, he is tortured and brainwashed and all these things, and it's kind of out of that and the recovery process. It's up and down. I think it shows the experience that he has."

Even Cressida, who only joined Katniss's entourage halfway through ⇨

FIGHTING WITH FINNICK

The lizard mutts in the trailers look amazing. Did you have to act opposite someone pretending to be a lizard?
Yeah! The stunt guys, who were incredible, they were all wearing white leotards with little black spots on. So for me, having the opportunity to do all my fight sequences with real people was very helpful, compared to the monkey scenes in the first movie I did, *Catching Fire*, where there was nothing there, so we were fighting the air which proves quite difficult for special effects as well as us.

Have you ever hurt anyone while you were filming fights?
It's happened a couple of times actually with stunt guys. Partly because I guess Finnick spends a lot of his time fighting and I broke my finger when we filmed *Catching Fire* during a rehearsing. Total accident, but I was told that my left hook needed a bit of work. It looked a bit flimsy. So I decided to show them that I could be hard, but it ended up connecting with the side of a guy's temple! He had to take a step away and sit down for a while, and then I realised that I'd broken my finger.

Finnick has just sat around at lot so far in District 13. Did you relish the opportunity to get out and fight again?
This is a funny story. The trident, as amazing as it was, a part of me was very angry that I didn't get to shoot a gun, because all the other guys were carrying guns! I was pretty useless. I was running around with a trident just like, "This is no good to anybody right now!" Unless it's close combat. Everyone else had machine guns and could shoot from miles away, and I'm stuck with a trident, a spiky fork in the background.

SCI-FI'S MOST WANTED

NOTORIOUS DICTATOR, OR JUST A DICK? WHO IS THE WORST LEADER IN THE UNIVERSE?

Immortan Joe
WANTED FOR: Withholding water and keeping wives
REWARD: Lifetime supply of crops (or whatever we have)

Palpatine
WANTED FOR: Turning the galaxy into his own regime
REWARD: The freedom of the galaxy

Coriolanus Snow
WANTED FOR: Lying, cheating and sending children to their deaths
REWARD: The key to Panem

Adam Sutler
WANTED FOR: Oppressing, regressing and distressing
REWARD: A celebration held in your honour

Skeletor
WANTED FOR: Being evil, villainous and cackling a lot
REWARD: Never watching *Masters Of The Universe* again

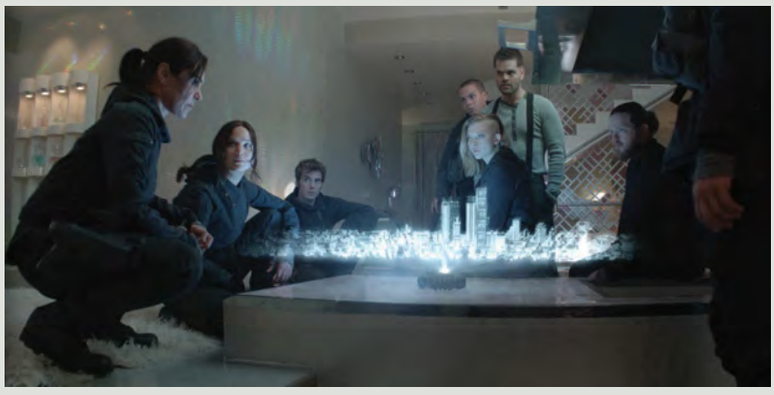
"KATNISS TAKES POWER AND DECIDES THAT SHE DOES BELIEVE IN THIS CAUSE"

JENNIFER LAWRENCE

Mockingjay - Part 1 is developing for the conclusion. "That's what I like about Cressida," Dormer tells us. "She's pretty together under fire all the way through. You see the nature of her job change. It becomes less about filming propos halfway through *Mockingjay Part 2* and more about just surviving, so her and her cameramen pick up their weapons and are busy struggling to survive themselves. That's what I like about her; she's very cool and calm under duress, which is fun to play."

After working on the series and spending so much time with the cast and crew, Hemsworth is sorry to see the story draw to a close: "For all of it us it was extremely emotional to have this project come to an end, and I think we were all really lucky to have remained such good friends and shared such a special experience together. It was a crazy world to be thrown into, an amazing project to be a part of, and to really grow up together doing. We're all, you know, what was it? I think about the person I was then and the person I am now. All of us, you know, we've grown up so much, and changed so much, and this will always be such a really special time in my life."

"[My last day of shooting was] really bizarre," admits Claflin. "I thought my last day was a Thursday, so I'd said all my goodbyes and did a huge run around and made sure I said goodbye to every



single person and gave them a hug and gave them a kiss and gave them a card that said thank you, and then at the end of the day when they said, 'That's a wrap!' Someone then said, 'Oh, actually, we need you guys to come in tomorrow morning.' So I said all my goodbyes and had to come in the next day for 20 seconds to do one more shot that they didn't quite get that day!"

Yet there's still time for another revelation before the big finale. Fans of *The Hunger Games* who aren't quite ready to say goodbye yet can console themselves with the ever-circling rumours that Lionsgate are planning a spin-off. The rumours, sadly, remain as such (for now), and we're definitely not going to start counting our chickens any time soon, but Claflin knows what he'd like to see from the series next.

"There are so many different options for origin stories that they could do," he says. "I think Haymitch's story is one that would interest me, how he won, and then what happened to him post, but also I think the beginning of the Hunger Games is a story that should be told as well. How and why they started it, the first one. Even when we get into that in the Hunger Games, you're made to feel that this happens a lot, and yes, we disagree with it. I feel like that first one must have caused huge amounts of uproar. We're going to kill 24 little kids, I mean, it's messed up. But someone had to make that decision to begin with."

What about a look at Finnick Odair's origins? "I think I'm a bit old for that now!" he laughs. "I think the most interesting part of his story was when he won the Hunger Games at the age of 14, and I have a feeling that I might be a little too old for that. I could play Finnick's dad, maybe. But he is a character that I think it really interesting and worthy of an origin story. I don't know that my acting ability is that good, unless they CGI'd me."

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 2 is in cinemas from 19 November.

GESTURES OF GOOD WILL

SOMETIMES A HAND GESTURE IS ALL IT TAKES TO GET SOMEONE ON YOUR SIDE. OR TEAR THEM DOWN. HERE'S A *HANDY* GUIDE TO GESTURING IN THE SCI-FI WORLD

Three-fingered salute
(The Hunger Games)
INSTRUCTIONS: Kiss the tips of your index, middle and ring fingers on your left hand before raising them into the air with your palm facing outwards.
MEANING: Thanks, admiration and goodbye to someone you love

Live long and prosper
(Star Trek)
INSTRUCTIONS: Facing your palm outwards, part your fingers between the middle and index. Stick out your thumb. Say 'live long and prosper' without blinking.
MEANING: Live long and prosper

The bird
(Guardians Of The Galaxy)
INSTRUCTIONS: Make a fist at your enemy before turning an invisible crank on the side of your hand and slowly raising your middle finger. Insincerely apologise.
MEANING: Back off, biatch

Go, web, go
(Spider-Man)
INSTRUCTIONS: Make the sign of the horns with your index and little fingers. Stick out your thumb. Shoot a web from your wrist and swing from tall buildings.
MEANING: I am here to save the day

Glowing finger
(ET)
INSTRUCTIONS: Point with your index finger while making the tip of it glow. Make your buddy do the same and connect to heal their wounds.
MEANING: May I borrow your landline telephone?

Missing hand
(The Empire Strikes Back)
INSTRUCTIONS: Hold our your hand and get your long lost father to cut it off. When your hand detaches from the rest of your arm, howl out in pain.
MEANING: I have daddy issues

SCIFINOW PRESENTS

THE HUNGRIES

AFTER FOUR YEARS IN THE MAKING, WE'VE REACHED THE FINAL CHAPTER OF KATNISS'S THRILLING SAGA. WITH GREAT PLEASURE, WE ANNOUNCE WHO *REALLY* WON THE HUNGER GAMES WITH THE SCIFINOW HUNGRY AWARDS

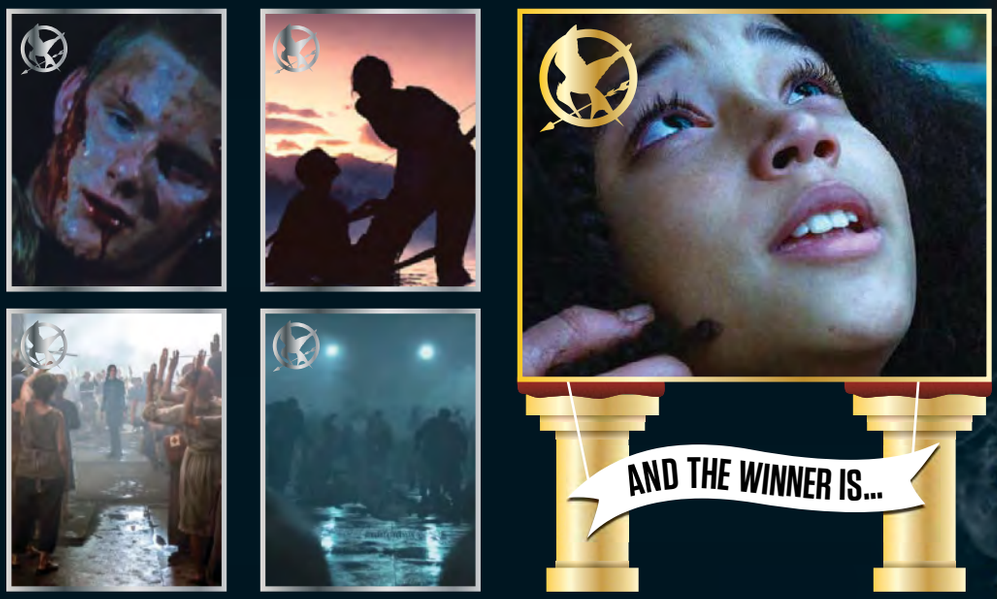
WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

BEST DEATH

Winner: Rue
Honorary mentions: Cato / The Morphling / The hospital patients / The District Five rebels

There could be no other winner, but Rue (so far...). She made us fall in love with her, but sadly her death came far too soon. And it was as meaningful as it was utterly devastating: many believe Rue's death was what sparked the rebellion for Katniss. Without it, we wouldn't have had District 13's army.

Cato's demise was bittersweet: Katniss and Peeta won the Games, but he was still just a kid who was mauled. Like Rue's, the Morphling's death was a major tear-jerker, which is amazing considering we never even knew her name. The patients and rebels were on a much larger scale, and the sacrifices were as upsetting as they were powerful.



BEST COSTUME

Winner: Katniss's wedding dress
Honorary mentions: Finnick's Tribute parade / Effie's many stunning outfits

Cinna's interpretation of Katniss's would-be wedding dress was killer. Not only did it look fabulous, it made about seven powerful political statements. It was a symbol of hope, rebellion and the future Mockingjay, and it demonstrated the cruelty of the Quarter Quell to the Capitol's citizens, who were definitely rooting for Team Katniss/Peeta.

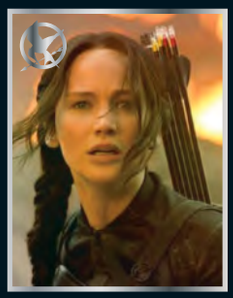
Finnick and Effie did so much with so little. Finnick would have stolen the Tribute parade if it wasn't for Cinna's flame design. Effie lit up District 13's catwalk corridors with her accessories and pure sass. She also managed to steal the District 12 Reaping for two years in a row with her tributes to pink and butterflies.

BEST HAIR

Winner: Cressida
Honorary mentions: Alma Coin / Seneca Crane / Johanna's fringe / Prim's braid

Katniss's braid might be the icon of the uprising, but Cressida's half-shaved head is way cooler. As director, she doesn't get to spend time on camera herself, which is frankly a massive waste of her fantastic 'do.

The honorary mentions' hair games are also strong. President Coin single-handedly proves that there's little more regal than a silver streak, while Seneca Crane highlights that facial hair can be anything it wants to be if it just believes in itself. Also worth noting are Johanna Mason's full fringe, which she probably uses to mask her inner pain, and Prim's totally regal but adorable double braid-y thingy in *Catching Fire*.

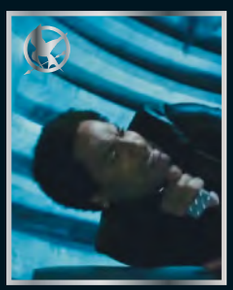


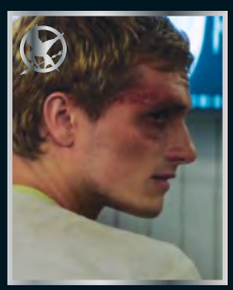
MOST GOOSEBUMP-INDUCING MOMENT

Winner: District Five blow up the dam
Honorary mentions: District 11 riot / Katniss speech / Katniss shoots apple / Prim gets cat

This is easily one of the best scenes of the entire series. District Five's commitment to causing chaos was astounding, and many lost their lives in the process.

Our honorary mentions are just as affecting. A three-fingered salute was all it took to spark a riot in Rue's home of District 11. Katniss is best when she's speaking from the heart: "Fire is catching, and if we burn, you burn with us," sent shivers up our spines. Her personality shone through when she shot at the judges in the Tribute Centre, and her and Prim's race to safety during the District 13 bomb scare had us clenching *everything*.



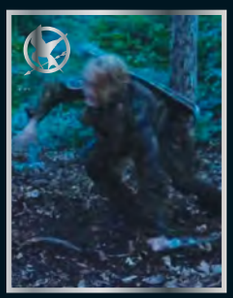


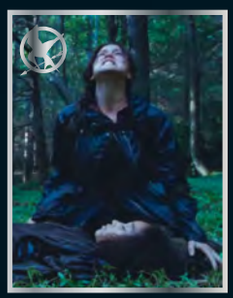
MOST UPSETTING MOMENT

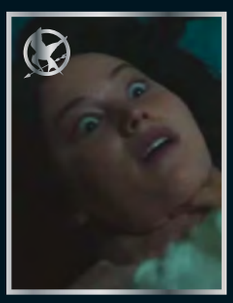
Winner: The 74th Victory Tour visits District 11
Honorary mentions: Cinna's murder / Peeta hijacking / Victors announcement / District 12

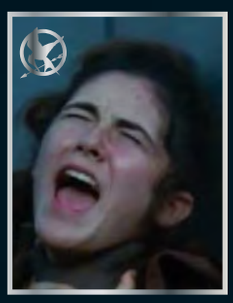
Catching Fire doesn't take long to kick you in the emotional gonads. From Katniss's heartbreaking speech to an old man's three-fingered salute, the 75th Victory Tour to District 11 is a rollercoaster for all involved.

Our runner-ups also prompt the waterworks. Cinna's ambiguous demise at the hands of Peacekeepers, broken and beaten Peeta post-hijacking, Katniss finding out there was to be a Victors-themed Games and Katniss's visit to a rubble-filled District 12 all make the cut. Why would you do this to us, Suzanne Collins?









BEST OVER-THE-TOP PERFORMANCE

Winner: Every time Katniss shouts 'Prim'
Honorary mentions: Glimmer's death / Katniss's reaction to Rue's death / Katniss gets strangled / Every time Clove talks

Everyone knows that tearful screaming is the key to a good performance. Whenever Katniss suspects that Prim is in danger, she turns up the tearful screaming to the highest level. When Prim's name came out the Reaping bowl: "PRIM!" When the Peacekeepers made Prim leave: "PRIM!" When the jabberjays had Prim's voice: "PRIIIIM!"

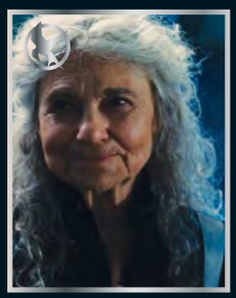
She had similar feeling towards Rue. She was muted, but her silent tearful screaming is as impacting as her at full volume. Glimmer's tracker-jacker death also provided much over-acting, and Clove sounded dramatically evil every time she opened her mouth.

BEST SELF-SACRIFICE

Winner: District Seven workers take out the Peacekeepers
Honorary mentions: Katniss volunteers for Prim / Mags

Katniss's 'if we burn, you burn with us' speech caught on pretty quickly, prompting a group of District Seven woodsmen to lure Peacekeepers into a forest and take them all at once. Many of the woodsmen died in the process. Sometimes the sacrifice is worth it.

Also worth mentioning, Katniss volunteered for her sister and started the whole rebellion, and Mags volunteered for Annie Cresta simply because she was old and Annie was young. Mags then went and pulled another act of immense bravery on us when she walked into the poisonous smoke so she didn't slow down the rest of the group. What a lady.

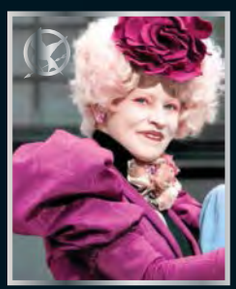


BEST MAKE-UP

Winner: Peeta's rock disguise
Honorary mentions: Cinna's gold eyeliner / Effie's Reaping look

When it comes to make-up, no one does it better than the son of a baker, who has lots of experience icing cakes. Peeta's imitation of a rock was an inspiration to aspiring make-up artists and camouflage-ists everywhere. It also saved his life. Powerful stuff.

In the Capitol, the best way to stand out is to try not to stand out. Cinna's understated gold eyeliner was his signature look, and a refreshing change from the rest of the shit that came out of that city. On the other end of the scale, we have Effie's original Reaping composition. It was god-awful, but remains one of her most iconic looks.

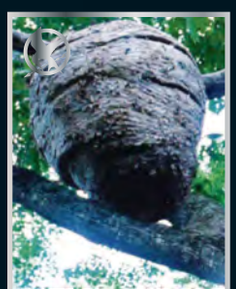


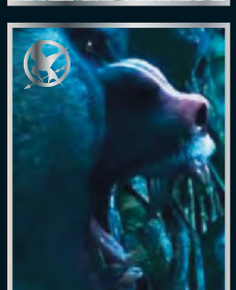
BEST ARENA OBSTACLE

Best Arena Obstacle
Winner: The poisonous fog
Honorary mentions: The tracker jacker nest / The mutts

A whiff of the poisonous fog in the Quarter Quell arena can cause anything from itchy scabs and painful pustules to convulsions and atrophying muscular tissue. Get engulfed in it and you die instantly. It truly is one of the arena's deadliest killers, and that is saying something.

What you get out of a tracker jacker nest depends on what you put into it, and what Katiss put into it was tactical revenge. The results were devastating. And monkey/wolf mutts, take your pick: they are both terrifying and deadly. There's something about genetic experiments that set our teeth on edge.



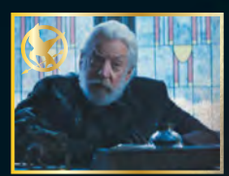


WORST TRIBUTE

Winner: Foxface
Of all the horrors inside the arena, it was food poisoning that brought the cunning Foxface down. There are fan theories that she used the berries to commit suicide, but if not, what an idiot.

WORST HAIRCUT

Winner: Claudius Templesmith
Claudius's barnet really is an unnatural disaster, and the Capitol is full of bad hair. He doesn't know if he wants to look like candy floss, a toilet brush or your Great Aunt Ethel.



MOST EVIL DEED

Winner: Coriolanus Snow
'Most evil deed' is everything President Snow is about. There isn't one act that stands out. He's been lying, cheating and killing people since before he became Panem's HBIC.

WORST PERSON

Winner: Romulus Thread
What could Thread possibly gain from whipping Gale in front of a crowd of bystanders? What's up with that, Thread? Are you just a generally awful bastard?

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GIRL OF STEEL

SOON TO BE SWOOPING ONTO TV SCREENS, SUPERGIRL LOOKS LIKE IT COULD BE THE FRESH AND FUN FEMALE-FRONTED SUPERHERO SERIES WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR. KARA ZOR-EL HERSELF MELISSA BENOIST AND THE SHOW'S PRODUCERS TALK TO US ABOUT BRINGING SUPERMAN'S COUSIN TO THE SMALL SCREEN...

WORDS **EDWARD GROSS**

APPARENTLY THESE ARE DARK DAYS FOR KRYPTONIANS. IN THE COMICS, SUPERMAN'S EYES SEEM TO BE IN A CONSTANT STATE OF RED AS THOUGH he's about to unleash his heat vision on an opponent, while in the movies he's breaking necks and being angst-ridden about his place in the world. There are a great many creators out there who feel that he's too difficult and out-of-step with the times to make him relatable. It would seem that hope is gone.

Enter *Supergirl*. The new series, starring Melissa Benoist in the title role, is more of a spiritual cousin to Richard Donner's *Superman: The Movie* than Zack Snyder's *Man Of Steel* or Christopher Nolan's *Dark Knight* trilogy. As such, it looks to restore a bit of that missing hope.

"Greg Berlanti and I are as guilty as anyone of putting a very dark hero out there for the world to enjoy," says *Supergirl* executive producer Andrew Kreisberg. "The *Dark Knight* trilogy is a masterpiece in my eyes, but there is room for hope and there is room for light and there is room for innocence. When *Superman:* ➢

The Movie came out in the late Seventies, we were entering a little bit of a darker phase in American history. We were coming out of the Vietnam War and we were coming out of Watergate and the oil crisis. That's why films like *Star Wars* and *Superman* really took hold of the public consciousness… there was a need for hope again. Every generation gets the superhero it needs, I think. Right now it's part of the reason that *The Flash* has been so successful, and hopefully *Supergirl* will enjoy the same, because there is a desire to see a superhero who wants to help people. They've been given this incredible gift and want to use it to save lives and bring hope, light, justice and purpose to others.

"For us," he continues, "there's just something about that Donner version – and this is not to be derogatory to any of the other versions that have come along since – that speaks to all of our DNA. It was truly the first time that a comic-book had come to life that was unabashedly proud of what it was. I don't think it's given enough credit for just how much heart went into bringing that to life. That film is really the star we've tried to guide ourselves by, and we just tried to make Kara as real a person as possible. "

Adds executive producer Ali Adler, who had previously worked with Berlanti on *No Ordinary Family*, "Christopher Reeve let us see the every man in Superman, and as a result we really related to him. Hopefully, Melissa will bring that as well. She's just so thrilling to watch. You put yourself in her position; you are her or you want to be her. As a result, we're embracing the positivity of that world. We're just trying to get out there this incredible personality that she has. It's being vulnerable when you're invincible. That was the challenge."

And that was what drew Benoist, who had previously starred in *Glee* and *Whiplash*, to the triple role of Kara Zor-El/Supergirl/Kara Danvers. "What I've found in playing her," she says, "is that there's this open, loving kind of attitude towards life in her. Just true, pure goodness. And she has the same kind of hope that Superman has. That is one of the key words that came to mind when we were shooting the pilot; I had to feel, almost internally, hopeful. And she doesn't quit, so I definitely think she is a beacon of hope."

In the series, 12-year-old Kara escaped the destruction of Krypton with her parents' help at the same time the infant Kal-El was sent to Earth. Arriving years after he had arrived and grown up, she was protected and raised by foster family the Danvers (played by former Supergirl Helen Slater and ex-Superman Dean Cain), growing up in the shadow of her foster sister Alex (Chyler Leigh) and learning to conceal the powers she shares with her cousin to keep her identity secret. At 24, Kara lives in National City, assisting media mogul Cat Grant (Calista Flockhart) and working alongside friend and IT technician Winn Schott (Jeremy Jordan) and photographer James Olsen (Mehcad Brooks). Her days of keeping her abilities a secret come to an end when Hank Henshaw (David Harewood), head of a secret agency, which is where her sister also works, enlists her to help protect the citizens of National City from various threats.

Kara is joined by fellow Superman aficionado James Olsen (Mehcad Brooks).

"BRINGING SUPERGIRL TO TELEVISION WASN'T REALLY A CHALLENGE; IT WAS EXCITING"
ALI ADLER

"Bringing Supergirl to television wasn't really a challenge; it was exciting," Adler enthuses. "The world is so big and the canon has lived for so long, that it's sort of like tearing it down to what people may know and kind of being able to run with her character-wise from there. So many people are familiar with the origin story of Superman and Clark Kent, and what was exciting to us was presenting her to a world that doesn't know her as well and getting to put our own character footprint on it. That was really thrilling for us."

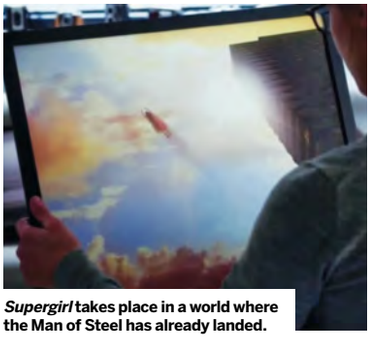
Part of that "footprint" was to actually take a cue from *Superman: The Animated Series*, which lowered Superman's powers a bit so that he could be legitimately challenged by something besides Kryptonite.

Kreisberg details, "What we didn't want to do was just have a show where if it wasn't Kryptonite, then there was no sort of stake to it. We've taken Kryptonian abilities down a little bit in terms of you can survive a lot, but you can get hurt. Obviously, Kryptonite is still very damaging, but even in the Reeve films, when you look at *Superman II*, when Superman punches one of the Kryptonians he has to shake his hand, like, 'Wow, that hurt!' When they throw the bus at him, he had to shake that off. We've tried to introduce as much of that as we could into the show. We wanted to avoid, 'She's Supergirl, she's Kryptonian, nothing is going to hurt her, and it's all going to be fine.' Which is not in any way to say, 'She's a girl, so she's less strong than Superman.' If we had Superman on the show, we would be showing the exact same thing with him. It just makes it a little bit more interesting."

A primary strength of the series is the casting of Benoist in the role, which is credited (appropriately enough) to casting director David Rappaport and his team. "They cast Stephen Amell for *Arrow*," points out Adler, "and he was the first one that Andrew [Kreisberg] and Greg [Berlanti]

From the looks of things, Supergirl will be working with the authorities.

As you can see, she shares her cousin's powers.



Supergirl takes place in a world where the Man of Steel has already landed.

had seen. When it came to *The Flash*, Grant Gustin was the first person that David put in front of Andrew and Greg. When Greg and I were starting this, David's first choice for the role was Melissa, and I don't think it's an accident. It's the hat-trick of casting, and he is very purposeful in his placement. Melissa Benoist was the first person we saw in the role, and then we fell in love with her. Then we had to see a thousand more woman, but she was very memorable from the start."

Elaborates Kreisberg, "I think right away what we loved about her was you instantly wanted good things for her, and you instantly wanted her to be safe. That was also the key in casting Grant Gustin. Both the Flash and Supergirl have extraordinary powers, but you do need to think that there's some kind of danger they're facing. It doesn't work if your heroes are so strong that nothing really bad can happen to them. With Grant, no matter what Barry Allen could do, there was this chance that he could be killed. Part of that is because of how much you feel for Grant. That was something that we instantly saw in Melissa. She obviously has a strength to her, but she also has an innocence and a fragility. We felt that instant desire to want to take care of her, and that's what makes it so exciting when she goes into any of these situations, because you feel like she may not come out on top, even though she always does.

"The thing that's been the biggest learning curve is just how truly game she is for all of the stunt work and the fighting," he adds. "She's obviously incredibly talented and an amazing singer and dancer, and she's really thrown herself into the physicality of the role. We've been really blessed three times over to have three actors in the form of Grant, Stephen Amell and Melissa, who are game for all of that.

Adler muses that the more they've gotten to know Benoist, the more they've been able to harness the joy that she has about life. "She is tireless and always wants to try one more take or rehearse one more time or practice that stunt," she says. "She just is unyielding and iconoclastic. She's just such a special soul. I think the crew feels her energy and light and wants to work harder. I've never seen a harder-working crew than the one on *Supergirl*. She really sets the tone of how to achieve, and that's true of her character as well. Both Supergirl our character and Melissa Benoist, our hero, inform each other so beautifully. You know, ⇨

© Gage Skidmore

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

Supergirl is continuing where Arrow left off – but is it too similar?

Arrow was such a success that it was hardly surprising that the show's producers would engineer a spin-off in the form of *The Flash*. The success of that show has resulted in the forthcoming spin-off DC's *Legends Of Tomorrow*, and an off-shoot of all of them is *Supergirl*. The question becomes, however, how many shows can be created by these creatives before there are diminishing creative returns?

"For myself, I find it invigorating," shrugs Andrew Kreisberg, an executive producer on all four shows. "Sometimes when I hear about people that have been on the same show for ten years, I'm like, 'How do you get excited to write the same show all the time?' But in this case, there's something kind of exciting about going from room to room, and it's like, 'Here's what we're doing on *The Flash* and here's what we're doing on *Supergirl*.' I think it's easy to say, 'Oh, you work on four superhero shows, so they are obviously all the same.'

"To me," he continues, "they're as different from each other as a cop show is from a legal show is from a family show. With *Arrow* it's dark and there's cynicism, and it's always our mantra on that show to see how we can hurt these people. Then when you come to *Flash*, there is obviously a different set of villains with the meta-humans, but you also want to have this incredibly heart-warming family show between Barry and the Wests and Barry and his father. Then you come to *Supergirl*, and now we have a female hero, which does make it different – and I'm getting to explore the *Superman* mythology, which is so exciting for me. One of the great things about working with the world of DC Comics is that it's a never-ending trove of ideas. We're constantly finding new and exciting ways to tell stories."

"YOU CAN SPEND FIVE MINUTES WITH MELISSA AND YOU FEEL YOUR LIFE IS BETTER FOR IT"
ANDREW KREISBERG

it just creates that wheel of energy and light and positivity and strength."

Kreisberg concurs: "You can spend five minutes with Melissa and you feel your life is better for it. It's 4am and you're on the set, and you hear these incredible gales of laughter. Like when somebody laughs and they don't care if anybody thinks that they are embarrassing themselves. You look over, and it's always the girl in the red cape. She is just indefatigable, and I think that spirit translates to the crew and why we're able to pull off this sort of show."

What becomes obvious when you speak to Benoist is that Adler and Kreisberg are not exaggerating when they praise the 27-year-old actress. Her enthusiasm is infectious. "My feeling about being cast?" she asks rhetorically. "Obviously I'm excited. I'm overjoyed. I feel so grateful and privileged to be taking this on, but it is a scary thing. It feels really big, and it feels like a lot of responsibility. But a good one. I love Kara already. I think she is such a ray of light. And when she's not Supergirl, I enjoy playing her quirkiness, her eccentricity. I had a lot of fun playing that; how much of a nerd she is. What I would like to take from the character is her perseverance. It's easy, I think, every day to get bogged down and to feel like nothing's giving. I would really love to have that perseverance that you never will give up, especially when you're so afraid.

"I also think Kara is enjoying being Supergirl, because she squashed it for so long. She kept it locked inside for so long when she knew what she was capable of.

Peter Facinelli stars as the mysterious Maxwell Lord.

She had her mum telling her how strong she was going to be, and now it's almost like I feel like I'm discovering myself along with her. She's really learning how to be a woman and discovering her independence.

"The first time I put on the suit," she laughs, "it was an automatic, instant chemical change inside of me. Something changed, and I feel like a different person every time I put it on. I feel like Kara Danvers in my day-to-day life; like such an awkward, weird girl, and that goes away… It's funny what a leotard, cape and tights will do."

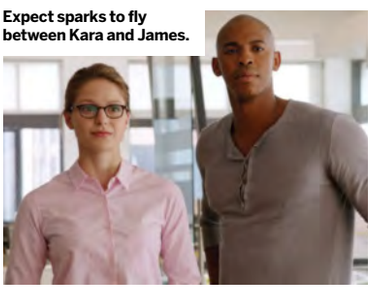
In considering the dramatic thrust of *Supergirl*, Kreisberg feels it's similar to *The Flash* in the sense that both shows have a hero that's just starting out in their career. "This show takes place in National City, which is an analogy for Los Angeles, and we sort of think of Metropolis as New York," he offers. "I think in LA we're all a little bit more cynical and a little bit more jaded and a little bit more suspicious of celebrity, and also enthralled by celebrity. She's having to deal with coming out as Supergirl, and that means trying to take this sort of glitzy town and give it a sense of hope .

"For Kara herself," Kreisberg proposes, "it's really about finding that sense of purpose and asking herself, 'Am I good enough to do this? My cousin has obviously had so much success. Am I worthy of wearing this 'S'?' In the pilot, a lot of what's happening is tied to what happened on Krypton, so Kara is obviously forced to deal with this still very fresh trauma that she lost her world and, unlike Clark, she remembers it. She remembers her parents, she remembers her friends, she remembers living on this alien paradise, and all of this was stripped away from her. There are a lot of superhero tropes in this show, some of which are very familiar and some of which are very specific to Supergirl. That's what's exciting to us as writers, and hopefully the audience will be excited by that as well."

Calista Flockhart makes a welcome return to TV as Kara's formidable boss Cat Grant.

Supergirl will start 26 October on CBS in the US, with a UK air date to follow.

Expect sparks to fly between Kara and James.



Daily Planet

IS IT A BIRD? IS IT A PLANE? WHO IS SUPERGIRL?

Mystery woman saves hundreds in plane crash horror

CLARK KENT

INCREDIBLE SCENES SHOCKED National City residents last night when a mystery flying woman stopped an airplane crashing into the National City River, saving almost 300 lives.

Flight 237 bound for Geneva, Switzerland, hit trouble at around 10:30pm on Thursday night when it started experiencing mechanical difficulties. The aircraft began circling the city after an engine failure.

The mystery woman – whose identity is still unknown – appeared at 10:45pm and flew underneath the plane, supporting it single-handedly. She then guided it away from the skyline and carried it through the cables of the Otto Binder Bridge.

The plane landed gently in the National City River, and the woman vanished. There have been no sightings of her since.

"It was amazing! She's like some kind of superhero," said one bystander.

"She has to be related to Batman or something," said another. "There's no other explanation. Batman's cousin. There's no way a regular person could have done that. Batgirl, I'm telling you."

The plane's pilot, Captain Martin Crieff, left the craft with a sprained ankle, but every passenger remained unharmed.

"It all happened so fast," said Captain Crieff. "I thought we were all dead for sure when the second engine cut out, but she saved us all. What a super girl. They should think of a nickname for her."

Media magnet Cat Grant of CatCo has dubbed the city's new hero 'Supergirl'.

If you have any information regarding the identity of the mystery flying woman, email sgwatch@dailyplanet.com.

SUPER-GATHERING CAUSES ALARM

Heroes and villains team-up baffles Star City

A STRANGE GATHERING occurred in downtown Star City this week when a group of superheroes and villains met on a department store rooftop. Among them were Heat Wave, Captain Cold and Hawkgirl.

Also spotted in the group were the CEO of Palmer Technologies, Ray Palmer, and vigilante Sara Lance, also known as White Canary, both of whom were previously presumed dead.

There's no telling what was discussed on that rooftop, but it looks as though an alliance is forming.

Move over Green Arrow, could they be the legends of tomorrow?

WHAT DO OUR READERS MAKE OF THE PECULIAR HAPPENINGS IN NATIONAL CITY?

27% I love it! This city needs a hero.

22% I hate it! It's against God and nature.

13% I'm undecided.

38% What are you doing? I said I'd call the cops if you came back onto my property! I'm not bluffing, bucko!

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MAXWELL LORD CAN HELP
Through a series of painless hypnotherapy session, Maxwell Lord will make cigarettes and nicotine cravings a thing of the past.

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"I stopped smoking within a week! Amazing work!" *Mr J Custer*
"It's like he's controlling my mind! Thank you, Maxwell Lord." *Mr J Constantine*
"I don't know where I am. What's happening to me?" *Mr P White*

Warning: Methods may cause illness.

PERSONAL ADS

IF YOU WOULD like to advertise in our personal section, please contact our Personal Editor, Lois Lane, on loislaneforever@dailyplanetnewspaper.com To respond to adverts, follow individual instructions or call 020-LONELY-HEARTS.

Me: Upstanding district attorney with a thirst for the law. Also me: bad boy with a wild side, and criminally good in the sack. You: the Dr Jekyll to my Mr Hyde. Contact Gotham City District Attorney Office if interested. Ask for "Two-Face."

RICH WHITE GUY. Early 40s, handsome, Ben Affleck-esque. Looking for a woman to love and spoil. Everyone I love dies. I'm just a lonely guy with a lot of love to give. Good sense of justice. Potential partners must like Batman.

GENERAL ZOD. Kryptonian military general looking for a voluptuous maiden to show me the sights. Let me get to know your Phantom Zone. GSOH. Non-smoker.
To contact, shout "TAKE ME NOW, GENERAL ZOD".

LASSOS & LIPSTICK

FROM THE RISE OF THE PHOENIX TO FRIDGING AND BATGIRLING, WE CHART THE TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN COMICS WITH OUR FUN LITTLE GAME...

WORDS **STEVE WRIGHT**

35

All-female X-Men
(2013)

X-Men #1 by Brian Wood and Olivier Coipel is launched, comprising a team of Storm, Rogue, Shadowcat, Jubilee, Psylocke and Rachel Grey.

36

Batwoman can't marry
(2013)

DC refuses to let Batwoman's marriage go ahead, prompting the resignation of the editorial team.

30

Batwoman comes out
(2006)

The new Batwoman, aka Kat Kane, comes out as one of comics' first high-profile lesbian characters.

29

17

Invisible Woman
(1985)

Invisible Girl becomes the Invisible Woman, characterising a different use of her powers and becoming the Fantastic Four's strongest member.

18

19

Storm leads X-Men
(1986)

Despite having lost her powers, Storm defeats Cyclops in a duel to determine who will become the new leader of the X-Men.

20

Miller vs Catwoman
(1987)

Frank Miller revises Catwoman's origin as that of a prostitute/dominatrix in *Batman: Year One* – a trait that most writers have since ignored.

16

Ant-Man hits Wasp
(1981)

Controversy is courted when Hank 'Ant-Man' hits his wife, the Wasp. It was a low point with regards the treatment of female characters.

15

Enter Firestar
(1981)

Having starred in *Spider-Man And His Amazing Friends*, Firestar becomes the first female character to cross over from TV to the comics.

14

Phoenix reigns
(1976)

Having previously been a low-level telepath, Jean Grey becomes the Phoenix – one of the most powerful characters in the Marvel universe.

Sheena
(1937)

The first issue of *Sheena, Queen Of The Jungle* is released. She is the first female character with her own title, published by Fiction House.

2

First superhero
(1940)

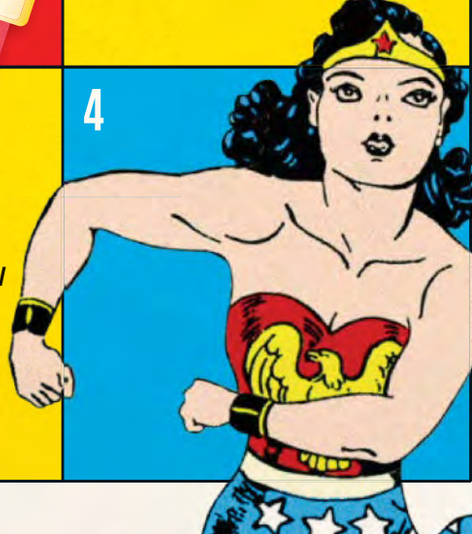
Fantomah, the first female superhero, is published in *Jungle Comics* #2 by Fiction House, written and drawn by Fletcher Hanks.

3

Wonder Woman
(1941)

Wonder Woman makes her first appearance in *All Star Comics* #8, created by William Moulton Marston. She is an instant success.

4



37

She-Hulk slammed
(2014)

Man Of Steel writer David S Goyer causes controversy with his remarks about She-Hulk, referring to her as "a giant green porn star".

38

39

Jane Foster is Thor
(2014)

Thor supporting character Jane Foster takes up the mantle after the God of Thunder loses the power to lift Mjolnir.

40

Batgirling
(2015)

It emerges that DC have told writers to go back to more traditional takes on their characters – avoiding what is internally referred to as 'Batgirling'.

28

Sue Dibny dies
(2004)

Elongated Man's wife is murdered at the start of DC's *Identity Crisis* crossover. It was later revealed that she had been frequently raped.

27

26

Birds Of Prey
(1996)

Birds Of Prey, a team-up book containing female characters like Barbara Gordon, Black Canary and Huntress, is launched.

25

DeWitt fridged
(1994)

Alexandra DeWitt, the girlfriend of Green Lantern, is killed and stuffed in a fridge, leading to Gail Simone coining the term 'Women In Refrigerators'.

21

Batgirl crippled
(1988)

The Killing Joke sees Barbara Gordon shot and paralysed by the Joker, before being photographed in various states of undress.

22

23

The 90s in general

The decade was a bit of a low, with 'fridging' becoming commonplace and a focus on revealing outfits and gravity-defying body proportions becoming the norm.

24

12

Bad Parody
(1973)

The first appearance of Man-Killer takes place in *Marvel Team-Up #8*. She was a loose parody of militant feminism that looks outdated today.

10

Wonder Woman strays
(1965)

Wonder Woman deviated from her roots in 'I Married A Monster', in which she married the misogynistic Mr Monster in an attempt to redeem him with her love.

9

5

First female editor
(1942)

Dorothy Woolfolk becomes first female editor at All-American Publications (later Detective 'DC' Comics)

6

7

Comics Code
(1954)

The Comics Code Authority is formed. DC's Editorial Policy Code stipulates that female characters be given reduced roles, if at all.

8

Supergirl soars
(1959)

The Kara Zor-El version of Supergirl first appears in *Action Comics #252*. Going on to great popularity, she later gets a film and TV show.

Frost In Translation
SADE
DIAMOND LIFE
© Sam Gilbey
Gilbey

AFTER HITS LIKE SHAUN OF THE DEAD AND ATTACK THE BLOCK, NICK FROST HAS SECURED HIS GEEK ICON STATUS. WE SPOKE TO HIM ABOUT HIS FAVOURITE FILMS AND NEW MEMOIR...

ANDY KNIGHTLEY. DANNY BUTTERMAN. CLIVE GOLLINGS. ED: ALL MEN ON A MISSION, AND CHARACTERS THAT MADE NICK FROST'S NAME AS A HERO OF GENRE. Now, he reveals how some of it happened in his new memoir, *Truths, Half Truths And Little White Lies*.

Though we get some insight into his life as an actor, the book mainly focuses on what happened before. His year abroad in Israel, his stint as a waiter, and the beginnings of his friendship with Simon Pegg provide anecdotes that most will be able to relate to. But as well as being hilarious, it's also incredibly honest. Frost goes into raw detail about his mother's alcoholism, his father's cancer and his own battle with depression.

"I think I'm kind of an honest person," Frost tells us. "I mean, if you're going to write an autobiography, you're not going to fill it with shit that didn't happen. I kind of think, 'What's the point of that?' I wanted to tell an honest account of what happened, and I think honesty is probably just one part of it. What I wanted was for, at the end, someone to go away and think, 'Well, this guy had a bit of a shitty time, and he's alright.' I think that's what I wanted to get across: keep going and it will be better.

"The book finishes when I'm 29… My catharsis came long before I started the book, so it was actually just fun, sitting there every day, chomping away. I didn't want to just write a book about meeting Steve Coogan or hanging out with Jack Black. That's just what my job is. It's amazing and I love it, but it's part of my job. I think it's unapproachable for normal people who work for a living. It has no context."

What's quite strange, though, is how Frost ended up being the person who hangs out with Steve Coogan and Jack Black. Before *Spaced*, he had absolutely no interest in becoming an actor. "After Simon and Jessica [Hynes] got *Spaced* commissioned and he said, 'I want you to come and do Mike Watt,' I kind of had to do it, you know? I said yes, but didn't realise what that entailed. I kind of liked it, but pretended I didn't, and then the second series happened, and I had to do that, and then another little bit came in. Now here we are 12 years later, and I really love it."

For most fans of Frost's work, it's almost impossible to pick a favourite, what with the cult appeal of the 'Cornetto' trilogy and standalone gems like *Attack The Block*. For Frost himself, it actually is impossible.

"I love the Cornetto trilogy, obviously. When Simon and I did *Paul*, it was something really special. We lived in New Mexico for four months, and that was kind of amazing. We got to work with John Carroll Lynch! And then – I know it wasn't the biggest film in the world – but putting in the eight months training for *Cuban Fury* was intense, and I'm really proud that it paid off, especially when 99.9 per cent of the dancing on screen is me. I've always been a bit of a dancer, so it's still in me… You have to go two or three times a week to stay in that kind of shape, but in terms of my Cuban fire, it's still there. Or it's heartburn, one of the two."

Frost also touches on the elements of pop culture that shaped who he was. At 11, he was the type to spend evenings watching movies like *Suspiria* and *I Spit On Your Grave*. "Having my mind melded by Dario Argento probably did something to break it… or fix it! I loved science fiction as a child, and I used to *love Blake's 7* and *Space 1999*. I've always liked *Close Encounters* or anything with a robot or a spaceship."

As a Fan of Many Things through most of his life, Frost is now thrilled about his reputation as a geek icon. He doesn't just take it in his stride; he basks in it. "It's amazing!" he says. "It's incredibly flattering that someone would make the effort to hunt down an 'I GOT WOOD' shirt and cover it in blood. What's that saying? Imitation is the greatest form of flattery… It's a wonderful thing. You're doing something they love and you could potentially touch someone enough in their house in Australia or Canada or Germany that they would want to dress up like you at a comic convention… I'll take that. That's a great compliment."

Truths, Half Truths And Little White Lies is available to buy now, published by Hodder & Stoughton.

Get nicked

Frost's characters have a habit of getting into pickles of epic proportions. Here's how they dealt with it...

1 Ed *(Shaun Of The Dead)*
Threat: Zombie outbreak
Location: North Finchley
Survival technique: Going down the pub
Status: Undead, being kept as some kind of pet

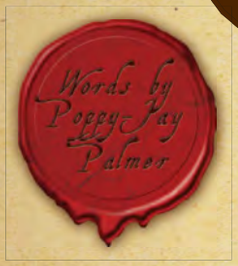
2 Clive Gollings *(Paul)*
Threat: Government cover-up
Location: American Southwest
Survival technique: Road trip
Status: Alive, living the high life as a best-selling novelist

3 Ron *(Attack The Block)*
Threat: Alien invasion
Location: South London
Survival technique: Hiding
Status: Alive, in prison

4 Andy Knightley *(The World's End)*
Threat: Alien invasion
Location: Newton Haven
Survival technique: Getting drunk and fisticuffs
Status: Alive, in a post-apocalyptic wasteland

5 Santa Claus *(Doctor Who)*
Threat: Parasite infestation
Location: The North Pole
Survival technique: Magic
Status: Alive

The last days of Leonardo



Da Vinci's Demons may be coming to an end after Season Three, but it's also getting darker, grittier and muskier. We joined stars Tom Riley and Elliot Cowan on the set for stories, secrets and more...

THERE'S SOMETHING VERY DIFFERENT COMING INTO SEASON THREE OF DA VINCI'S DEMONS: IT'S CALLED THE PLEASURE PALACE, AND IT'S EXACTLY what it sounds like. Huge, musky, and reeking of a mixture of roses and pheromones, it's what you'd expect a brothel to look like if it was designed by a team of randy historians. Chains, flowers and chandeliers hang from every ceiling. Extras in cock socks and dressing gowns line the walls and lounge over decorated banisters. Curtain rods are embellished with carved phalluses, and staircases have been designed to look like vaginas. It's the seedy underworld of 15th-century Florence, and a talking point for the show's final season. We spoke to Tom Riley and Elliot Cowan – who play Leonardo and Lorenzo respectively – about it, and partook in an embarrassing amount of playground giggling.

"Apparently Lorenzo has been going to the Pleasure Palace for years, which is something I didn't know about my character," laughs Cowan, "I knew that he put it about a bit, so I guess it's no real surprise. Florence, in its liberal outlook on the world and religion, has this underworld. Every city will after all, and always has. So this has been ticking over in my city. It's a place that I used to visit when I wasn't getting it from Clarice (Lara Pulver) and when Lucrezia (Laura Haddock) perhaps was being a little truculent too. So I will see it for the first time today, and all manner of hedonism is going on... Hopefully it will fulfil your imagination. I'm about to get stuck in.

"It's not for the first time that I've had to get stripped off and humiliated, so I'm fully prepared and we'll see what unfolds. I think it's a good place to have the kind of discussion we're about to have. The last time I was as exposed was in Season One in a sauna, having a political discussion about arms. We had to negotiate whilst starkers. I think it's quite good to juxtapose decisions of power and politics with nakedness, vulnerability, sexuality and all those kinds of things. Weirdly, it gets easier [to strip off] the older I get. I don't know why. I think it has something to do with knowing that it's all a bit silly, on one level, to be worried about things."

"It's a very impressive new set build by Edward Thomas, who is our fantastic production designer and it's just a depraved den of iniquity," jokes Riley. "We're trying to not linger too much on the filth, but as actors we can't help but see it. The camera tries to just glimpse it, but we have to live with it in our faces, day in and day out. I'm not involved. I'm there to pull someone out who shouldn't be in there."

With the new set, *Da Vinci's Demons* also got itself a new showrunner for its final season. *The X-Files* and *The Vampire Diaries* producer John Shiban took over from series creator David S Goyer to helm the season, coming in with buckets of enthusiasm and a deep love for the show. Fans can expect Season Three to be very different to what they've seen before.

"It's night and day! I think it's going to be really interesting to see how people take it," says Riley. "John has come on board, and he just loved the potential

Leonardo and Zoroaster (Gregg Chillin) hit the drink.

> "IT'S GOING TO BE INTERESTING TO SEE HOW PEOPLE TAKE IT"
> TOM RILEY

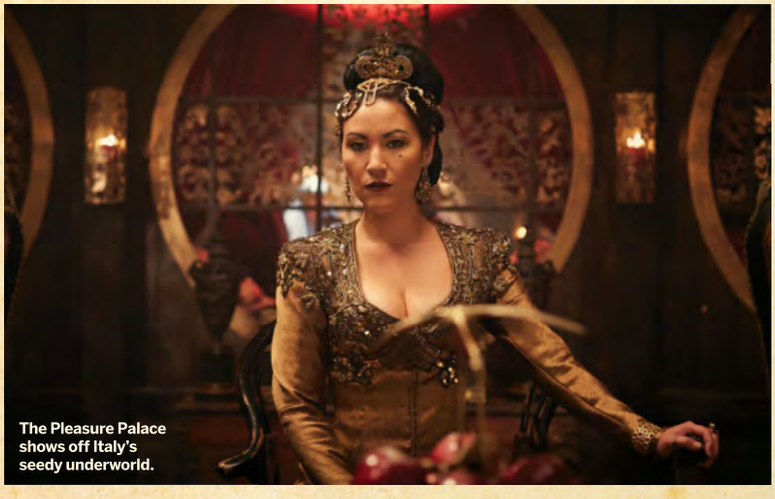
Leonardo (Tom Riley) doesn't have time for romance this season.

of the show. He didn't necessarily feel it was being explored to its full potential. Before, we were going for a very bombastic, exciting, entertaining adventure. John has been adamant that we can delve deeper into the characters and make a richer, more character-driven drama than just an exciting adventure show, which it still continues to be, but it's very much the characters that drive the plot rather than the other way around.

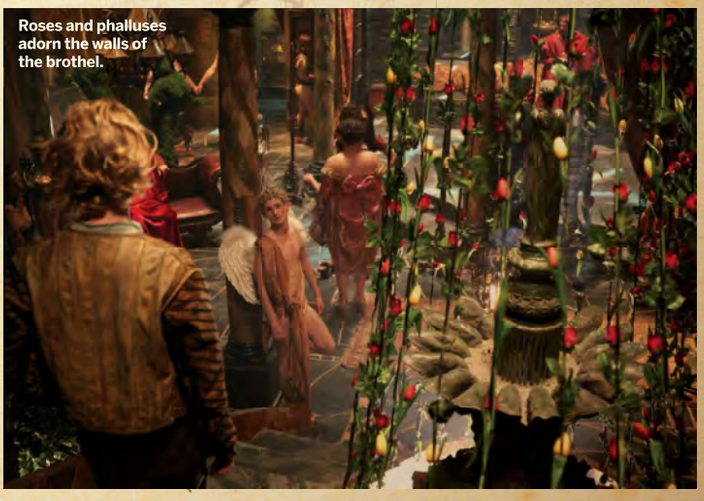
"Previously, we've skewed closer to historical events in order to keep people on track, but if the historical event won't necessarily match who the character is then it won't happen, rather than just doing something because it's cool or because we have to. It's more dialogue-heavy, it's more relationship-heavy, and it has a grittier, more real look. He's impacted it a huge deal, but very much for the better. It feels like the show we wanted it to be, or in fact the show we thought it was in the first season."

"It was different coming back this year, because we had a different helmsman, and with that I think it's shaken down a few of the changes on the different departments," agrees Cowan. "That's always strange when you've got to know a certain group of people very well. It did feel almost like a new show to me coming back than it had done the second time, so I've just got used to that. There were a few people poking around on my face and in my clothes and such that I hadn't seen before. And then there has been more of a presence from the writers' room. It's just been a different energy coming from America. It was very good for the first couple of years, but there's a different conversation going on there, which is very strong.

"It does feel like we're very much at home here in Swansea [where the show's team is based]. Swansea is more and more supportive of us, and we them. There's a great community dialogue going on there, so I really love being here... I think where the story is going in terms of the entertaining side of things, it seems to be going from strength to strength. So I hope it continues. If I suddenly went, it would be very hard for all of us. They would have to find something very special to come in and support this place. Perhaps they have it all lined up. Perhaps the Ottomans are about to come in and invade now! They might have a huge production that they want to get in ⇒



The Pleasure Palace shows off Italy's seedy underworld.



Roses and phalluses adorn the walls of the brothel.

© Luc Viatour

here... but I think just at the moment it's really in its apotheosis. If we can hold onto that for a couple more years I will be very happy."

Unfortunately for Cowan, it looks like the Ottomans have in fact invaded. The show was cancelled by Starz earlier this year, leaving a lot of fans somewhat bitter. But there's still a whole season ahead of us in which we can expect to see a lot more character developments for the whole ensemble.

"[Lorenzo] may have been cynical in the past, but now he's far more defensive, far more brutal and extreme and dictatorial and didactic about the way it's going to be for the sake of Florence's survival," says Cowan. "Where there may have been deals broken in the past and affiliations – for example, that sauna scene. I went to Urbino to try and get his allegiance, his alliance with me. But those days have gone. My fingers have been burnt too many times. My body has been pierced too many times by the sword and spear of my countrymen, so I don't need to entertain that now as a philosophy. It's Florence or die. I think that would mean some of my allies that you've seen me stick with from the beginning are having to negotiate their regard for me now. So I don't know where that's leading. I do what I'm told, but it's clear that it's going in a different direction now."

Leonardo's sexuality hasn't really been touched upon since the sodomy trail in Season One. Will the new season mean we get to explore his relationships in more detail? "We don't really touch on any relationships this season," confirms Riley. "It's because of the Turkish invasion. Leonardo isn't really in a place for relationships, and hasn't tended to be. There's been that one overarching drive with Lucrezia, which we are still continuing to serve, but not necessarily in the way people expect. We don't really spend any time together. But when we sat down and wrote the initial arc for this season, there was a definite plan of action to not just confront [Leonardo's sexuality], but explore it in a really interesting way and build on what we started in the first season. And as the series became richer and deepened, it extended, and the plan for Season Three became Season Three and Four. That whole idea has been knocked later, but that will be giving the subject the exploration it deserves and needs. We get a bit more gay at some point, yeah. I play it as gay as I can! Me and Gregg [Chillin, who plays Zoroaster on the show] are constantly thinking of new ways to eyeball each other. And there's certainly stuff with Riario (Blake Ritson) that I'm sure goes beyond the pale of normal antagonism."

Taking into account its cancellation, it looks like Season Three may conclude with a lot of loose ends, sadly. *Da Vinci's Demons* TV movie, anyone?

Da Vinci's Demons Season Three premieres on 25 October at 9pm on FOX.

Things get even more serious as the series draws to a close.

> "HE ISN'T IN A PLACE FOR RELATIONSHIPS, AND HASN'T TENDED TO BE"
> TOM RILEY

From the desk of Leonardo da Vinci

Da Vinci's Demons spinoff ideas. By Leonardo da Vinci

Da Vinci In Space!

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Youth Hostelling With Leonardo da Vinci

A documentary series in which da Vinci uses his wit, charm and knowledge of Italy to help groups of teens select youth hostels, cultural tourist spots and wine-tasting workshops – everything they need for the perfect gap year.

Da Vinci Vs Predator

While leading an expedition to Antarctica, Lorenzo discovers a rugged and heroic da Vinci inside an ancient tomb. When an extraterrestrial species known as Predators descend on the snowy wasteland, it's up to da Vinci to fight them off single-handedly.

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ONE LAST BITE

THE STARS OF HEMLOCK GROVE TELL US THAT THE NETFLIX SHOW'S FINAL SEASON IS CRAZIER THAN EVER

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

HEMLOCK GROVE IS A SHOW THAT LIKES TO SHOCK ITS AUDIENCE. ADMITTEDLY, THAT'S THE KIND OF ANODYNE DESCRIPTION THAT APPLIES TO A LEGION OF TV SHOWS, BUT *Hemlock Grove* is different. *Hemlock Grove* is the kind of show that pulls a flying space lizard out of nowhere for a season finale cliffhanger. Oh yeah, and a baby made a small monkey's head explode with its mind. *Hemlock Grove* shocks its audience because there is no way to predict what it is going to do, and that's a very rare thing indeed.

"It is that type of show," laughs star Famke Janssen, who plays wickedly selfish vampire (sorry, upir) matriarch Olivia Godfrey. "It has to outdo itself all the time. I know we started off at a pretty high point already in terms of shocking our audience. So I was very curious to see where it was heading in the finale."

As are we all. The finales to each of the two previous seasons have been crazy enough, and we can only imagine what *Hemlock Grove* will offer in terms of closure, as Season Three has been confirmed as its last. "Yes, well, expect a lot of surprises," deadpans Janssen. "That I can tell you."

"I have no idea how people are going to react," Landon Liboiron, aka werewolf Peter Romancek, tells us. "I mean, it's like at the end of both of our seasons, it's sort of this bizarre ending. I think one thing that they can expect is that it is a definite ending. Every character has an ending, it's resolved." Peter has come a long way from the loner outcast who lived with his mum (Lili Taylor, sadly not returning for Season Three) in a trailer. Together with Bill Skarsgard's wealthy upir Roman Godfrey, Peter has been the focal point of the show. In the first season he was the lead suspect in a series of grisly murders, and in the second he started becoming the monster he was afraid of before rallying to help Roman protect his baby Nadia. Now, he's got a family of sorts, together with his psychic cousin Destiny (Tiio Horn) and her fiancée Andreas (Luke Camilleri).

"In the first season Peter was very much a lone wolf. He only trusted his own instincts, and then in the second season he relied on the relationships with others," explains Liboiron. "In the third season the relationship between Destiny and Peter is very important, and he gets involved with Andreas more. He starts getting deeper and deeper into a crime world that he doesn't want to be a part of."

> **"WE STARTED OFF AT A HIGH POINT IN TERMS OF SHOCKING OUR AUDIENCE... I WAS CURIOUS TO SEE WHERE IT WAS HEADING"**
> **FAMKE JANSSEN**

While Peter is trying to stop his cousin's new fiancé from putting them all in incredible danger, things are no less dangerous on the Godfrey side of town. Olivia is battling for custody of her daughter Shelley with Roman, who knows full well what his mother is capable of. She's got a new apartment, but her attitude is still very much the same.

"Of course, with Olivia you never quite know what she's looking for, because there's always an element of being completely selfish, self-absorbed and egotistical in every one of her actions," Janssen tells us. "So even if she's struggling with being a good mother or not being a good mother, or having remorse over killing somebody or whatever, always in the background, or sometimes in the foreground with her, she's a real survivor. So it's, 'What do I need to do? I'm going to die, who do I kill or what do I need to do in order to survive?' That's her reality. That's how she operates, I think, and she doesn't know any other way."

Having quite literally ripped out her lover-turned-hunter Norman Godfrey (Dougray Scott)'s heart, the two biggest unknown quantities in Olivia's life are her son Roman and Hemlock Grove's resident mad scientist Dr Johann Pryce (Joel De La Fuente), the latter of who may be able to save her life if he can keep from losing his mind – and if he wants to, of course. "I've always been a very big fan of the Pryce-Olivia relationship, because they're so open," enthuses Janssen. "They're both absolutely grotesque in ⇒

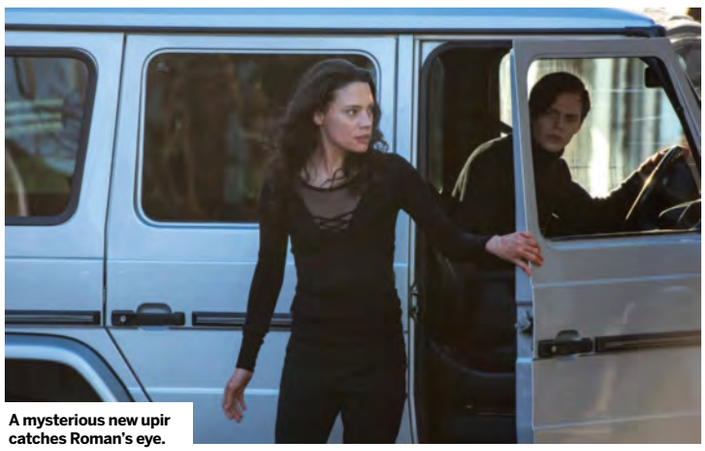
Olivia and Dr Pryce: two mad, scheming villains with terrible secrets.

> "IT GETS PRETTY OUTLANDISH, SO JUST KEEPING THE CHARACTERS GROUNDED WAS A TOUGH JOB"
> LANDON LIBOIRON

The Roman/Peter bromance is put to one side while they look for baby Nadia.

what they'll do, but there's an honesty in it, between the two of them, with who can outdo the other in terms what they'll do to get what they want."

"The relationship with Roman remains complicated," she continues. "I can't give away too much, but it's even more complicated by the arrival of a young woman, and it will be interesting to see how Olivia responds to that new triangle that exists. In terms of Roman and Olivia, I've always thought that they're very similar… it's always a power struggle between the two of them, and I don't know if there's a universe that's big enough where they can both exist at the same time."



A mysterious new upir catches Roman's eye.

The duelling dynamics between the characters have been the consistent core of a show that delights in the bizarre and the shocking. At weird as things get, there's always the slightly awkward but fully loaded bromance between Roman and Peter, both of who are desperate to find their missing baby Nadia, who was abducted by that aforementioned flying lizard thing at the end of Season Two. "It gets pretty outlandish, so just keeping the characters as grounded as possible was a tough job," admits Liboiron. "Bill and I we had a lot of fun working together on the show. We definitely felt very passionately about the characters, and we really wanted to serve them as best we could. By the time we were in the third season, we were in a completely different show than what we started with, and so [the cast] became very close, working together and keeping the characters as intact as possible."

The major change is in large part due to the arrival of showrunner Charles 'Chic' Eglee, who joined the series at the start of its second season, taking over from Lee Shipman and the novel's author, Brian McGreevy. Although the second season was still definitely, well, mad, it was slightly more rooted in a recognisably real-ish world, as opposed to what Liboiron describes as "very much the oblique and mysterious horror-filled world of Brian McGreevy."

"The first season was always meant to stand on its own, because it was based on the novel," Janssen explains. "And the second and third season were created by Chic Eglee with his writing team, and it automatically became a different animal than the first one. Obviously, the same characters

10 Corpse-kissing teen

Christina turned out to be the villainous vargulf in Season One, and getting up to things like this no doubt put her on that path.

9 Destiny's psychic corpse-eating

To see what the dead see, Destiny eats them. Gobbling a piece of guts before spewing it out again was her finest moment.

8 Leech eating

Roman's trying to cut back on his blood drinking in Season Two, so he pays an old man to come to his room, covered in leeches, for a snack. Pretty gross.

7 Shelley's glowing face

Gentle giant Shelley isn't nearly as scary as she looks, and she was prone to glowing blue when she was having emotions.

6 Wolf change in reverse

The transformation became the show's most talked-about moment. The reverse has Peter's hand reaching out the wolf's mouth.

or whatever, but it's a different stamp that was put on by a different showrunner, and a different set of ideas behind that. So I think Seasons Two and Three are probably much more consistent tonally compared to One."

One source of consistency for Liboiron has been the werewolf transformation sequences, which have given *Hemlock Grove* some of its most iconic moments. The wolf snout emerging from Peter's mouth in the first season was gruesome and fascinating, while the human hand reaching out from the wolf's fangs as the process was reversed in Season Two was just as jarring and effective. We are assured that Season Three will definitely see the actor getting covered in goo in the middle of the night. "Yes, it's still a pretty strange thing," he laughs. "When you perform the transformation scenes, it's a thing that doesn't exist. You can't really learn how it's done physically; you can only create it in your own mind and hope everyone else filming and doing the effects is doing their job to make it as elevated as possible. it's one of those things where you just have to let go of all your ego and just trust that you're doing your job and everyone else is supporting it."

We can't imagine that there was a shortage of those moments on set. With blood flying everywhere, tanks full of secret life-giving goo, babies with Scanners powers and flying space lizards, time spent working on *Hemlock Grove* must have been a combination of the brilliant and the insane. "There's actually so many moments that are both of what you just described!" laughs Liboiron. "It's hard to think of one. I mean, there's so many moments where Bill and I, or Joel, or Tiio, we found ourselves standing there in the middle of the night, covered in blood, and just kind of thinking, 'This is our reality! This is what we're doing; this is actually what we're doing right now!' We would have these moments often, and the only way we could really get through it is just like, laugh – laugh at it, because it was so ridiculous, but also so great that we were doing it together, and yeah, I don't that we'll ever have the same experience again. When I came to *Hemlock Grove*, I just expected the most bizarre, and they just keep going with it. It certainly wasn't boring!"

Hemlock Grove Season Three will be available to stream on US and UK Netflix from 23 October.

Will Shelley Godfrey find some kind of home?.

Peter is drawn into a criminal underworld.

WTF WOLF TRACK

The maddest moments in a mad, mad show

5 What's in the tank?

Dr Pryce has a lot of secrets, including a tank full of liquid vamp food. And he's building a replacement body for Shelley.

4 Mysterious lactating

Season Two introduced Miranda, a young woman who starts lactating when she's around Roman's daughter Nadia. Weird.

3 Monkey head explodes

In the Season Two finale comes this spectacular bit of WTF-ery: as the baby makes a monkey's head explode with its mind.

2 Werewolf transformation

Still the high watermark for the series' effects, this transformation sequence was gory, fascinating and awesome.

1 Dr Space Lizard

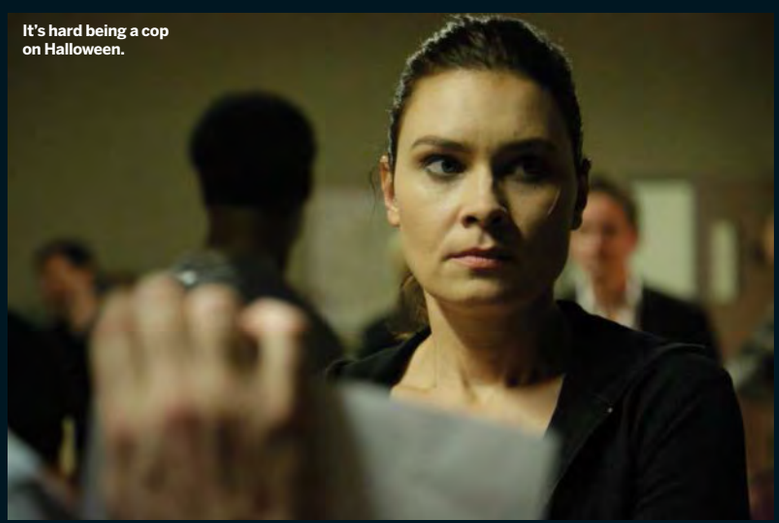
Dr Space Lizard, aka Dr Arnold Spivak, reveals himself to be a scaly flying monster and abducts Nadia and Miranda, bringing Season Two to a close. WTF.

TRICK OR TREAT...

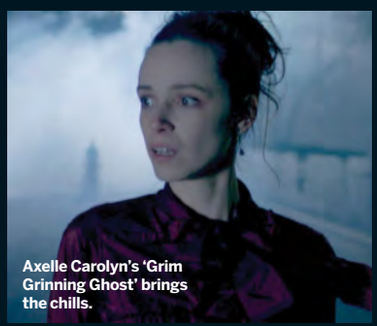
THE HORROR ANTHOLOGY DIRECTORS TELL US HOW THEY PAID TRIBUTE TO THEIR FAVOURITE HOLIDAY SEASON

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

EVERY HORROR FAN LOVES HALLOWEEN. WE ALL HAVE A NOSTALGIC GLOW FOR IT, EITHER FROM FOND MEMORIES OF TRICK-OR-TREATING OURSELVES, OR FROM WATCHING JOHN CARPENTER MOVIES AT FAR TOO YOUNG AN AGE. RECENTLY, HOWEVER, THE HOLIDAY SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A LITTLE HARD DONE BY. ENTER AXELLE CAROLYN (SOULMATE) AND Neil Marshall (*Dog Soldiers*), whose anthology horror *Tales Of Halloween* unites some of the genre's brightest talents for a gleeful celebration of our favourite time of year. "I really hope that whatever time of year people watch it, they go, 'Oh, I can't wait for Halloween, how many days left?'" enthuses Carolyn.



It's hard being a cop on Halloween.



Axelle Carolyn's 'Grim Grinning Ghost' brings the chills.

Pat Healy presents some distressing evidence.

1 THE MOST WONDERFUL NIGHT OF THE YEAR

"The first idea that came up was to make an anthology movie with all the friends that we have in LA," explains Carolyn, who brought together the band of filmmakers. "Our best friends work in horror movies... there's a real community spirit, and we were like, 'We need to do something about that and we need to celebrate it. It's perfect to make something together.' Then I thought, 'We spend six weeks a year celebrating Halloween, and Halloween's my favourite time of year, and we have this little sign on the door that counts down the days to Halloween...'"

"It's a big deal for the entire group of friends," adds Marshall. They were determined that they deliver a movie that lived up to the holiday. "It's a shoestring movie, and we elevated it," he tells us. "The big thing was that we wanted it to have production value... We wanted to shoot on the best camera available. We went into it saying, 'I'm not going to make something that looks cheap,' and we didn't."

Always check your candy, and the kid you're abducting.

2 HALLOWEEN MEMORIES

Although they've always loved it, their Halloweens weren't always this lavish. "I remember growing up in the Seventies, and we tried to do Halloween," Marshall remembers. "My dad would make masks for us, and we'd have people round and dunk for apples, and we'd make jack-o-lanterns and stuff, but we didn't have pumpkins. We'd have to make them out of turnips, which is the traditional way, and it was all just a bit naff!"

"I grew up in Belgium, there's no Halloween there," remembers Carolyn. "Every 31 October from the age of eight I started doing little parties. I would just decorate the room with whatever I could find."

3 THE BAND OF TRICK-OR-TREATERS

The roster of filmmakers is an exciting mix of established names and up-and-comers, including the likes of Lucky McKee (*May*), Darren Lynn Bousman (*Saw II-IV*) and many more. "More and more people wanted to get involved," remembers Marshall. "It was like an infection..." Carolyn adds, "In some instances it was almost going against what you expect from the filmmaker. Nobody could expect what Lucky McKee did, that's for sure, because that is wild and amazing and awesome. Even having read the script, I was like, 'Okay dude, I don't quite get it, but I trust you enough to know it's going to be great!'"

> HALLOWEEN IS NOT ABOUT HURTING PEOPLE OR SCARING THEM TO DEATH; IT'S ABOUT HAVING A GOOD FRIGHT AND SPOOKY FUN
> AXELLE CAROLYN

Cute or not, these trick-or-treaters are a dangerous menace.

4 RESPECT YOUR ELDERS

Tales Of Halloween also shows a deep love and respect for the genre's greats. John Landis and Joe Dante have small speaking roles, while Stuart Gordon, Mick Garris and Barbara Crampton have cameos, and the title music is composed by the legendary Lalo Schifrin. The best of the bunch, however, is the appearance of Adrienne Barbeau as the DJ who narrates the film, channelling her character Stevie Wayne from John Carpenter's classic horror *The Fog*. "She showed up on set," starts Carolyn, "and was like, 'Do you want me to do the Stevie Wayne voice?' 'Yeah!'"

5 RULES OF THE HOLIDAY

With ten stories to fit in, Carolyn tells us that she wanted to make sure that the film gelled but steered clear of strict instructions. "It had to be a similar universe. So it had to be kind of the same town, the length had to be roughly between six and ten minutes, and no found footage. We had to make it a collaborative process. So everybody had to be willing to hang out on a regular basis and discuss the script and make it all work together."

The tone is also very consistent, keeping away from being too dark or scary. "You give ten horror directors carte blanche to come up with whatever story they want, and although some of them are violent, gory or whatever, none of them are mean-spirited," Marshall tells us. "They all have a sense of fun or mischief, but it's a love letter to Halloween. There's nothing vindictive about it at all."

"It's what Halloween's about," stresses Carolyn. "Halloween is not about hurting people or scaring them to death, it's about having a good fright and it's about spooky fun."

Tales Of Halloween is available through VOD now.

The World That Never Was

AMAZON'S MOST WATCHED ORIGINAL SERIES PILOT OF ALL TIME, THE FULL-SERIES ADAPTATION OF PHILIP K DICK'S DYSTOPIAN NOVEL THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE IS FINALLY HERE. WE SPOKE TO CREATOR FRANK SPOTNITZ AND THE CREW ABOUT CREATING A SHOW IN WHICH THE BAD GUYS WON...

WORDS **EDWARD GROSS**

Setting The Scene

Do you remember the battle at Virginia Beach? The bomb dropping on Washington DC? These were the final struggles that decided the outcome of World War II, ultimately allowing Hitler's Third Reich and Imperial Japan to take control of the United States. In turn, this resulted in the country being split into three parts: the Pacific States Of America (a Japanese puppet state comprising the US territory west of the Rocky Mountains); a German puppet state made up of the eastern half of the country, and the Rocky Mountain States, serving as a neutral zone between the two.

If none of this sounds familiar, then soon you will be able to head over to Amazon's streaming service to watch the ten-episode first season adaptation of Philip K Dick's 1962 novel, *The Man In The High Castle*, for a chilling look at how history could have unfolded. The pilot was originally released back in January, where it became the most watched original series on Amazon.

"I had read the book in college," offers executive producer/writer Frank Spotnitz, whose credits include *The X-Files*. "Among many things, the thing that struck me was the idea of a world where we lose; where the 'good guys' don't win. That made a big impression on me. So did the ordinariness of being in this world, because we don't often get to see the bad guys up close. The bad guys are usually over there, and we're shooting at them or they're trying to kill us, but here you are, living among the 'bad guys' and they're us. That's a really interesting idea for a TV series that I haven't seen before."

There are, he points out, difficult concepts to grasp in the book, like the I Ching, alternate realities, authenticity and what Dick referred to as 'his-tor-ris-city'. Says Spotnitz, "I wanted to do a show that touches on those things. That has themes about what's real, which is very common to a lot of his stories, and what it means to be human and the exploration of the quality of humanity, especially if you're living in a different world."

Spotnitz spent a great deal of time in Germany, undergoing something of an evolution of his observations of the German people and their own legacy. This has helped to fuel the creative direction of *The Man In The High Castle*. "I've taught film school in Berlin several times," he says, "and like a lot of Americans, the first time you go to Germany all you think about is all those movies. You think about Nazism and the war. But when you go back again, it starts to become more about where you are, and the people around you, and the fact these people weren't even close to being born at the time the war was going on. It was their grandfather's generation, and in some cases their great-grandfather's generation. And they're haunted by it. It's a terrible legacy to have to live with; that this happened on your soil and your country. I find them as people lovely and warm and thoughtful and probably, because of the past, more alert to injustice and social responsibility.

"I don't think the appeal of fascism is limited to one type of people," he elaborates. "Sadly, there's something in the human psyche that can be drawn to extremist, absolutist, authoritarian thinking and ideology. All of us on the planet are susceptible to that under the right circumstances. So what I wanted to do was make a show about us and about Americans being put in that situation. How would we behave? We all like to think we're the good guys, and that if something like this happened we'd all join the resistance, risk our lives

and fight the good fight. But I really believe that the vast majority of us, like the vast majority of German people in World War II, wouldn't do that. The vast majority of us would keep our heads down, look after our families, try to get along and stay alive. That's what the French did, and the Danish. But then there's the unbelievable courage of those who would. Those who would stick their necks out and say, 'No, I'm going to stand up, even though the odds are obscene.' I find that touching and incredible. And so I wanted the series to be about both of those things. About the vast majority who did nothing, and the small minority who, for whatever reason, would step out of line, put themselves in danger and sacrifice for an ideal."

Production designer Drew Boughton was equally as touched by what it represents. "I think it's one of the most interesting, simple premises anything can have, but what's at the centre of it is terrifying and horrible, and such an important thing to keep reminding everybody of," he says. "There's a complex political statement wrapped in anything that has to do with fascism or totalitarianism, and in this case, to play out an alternative history wherein the Nazis won is to confront all of the horror of the Holocaust, but also to challenge the mistakes that any powerful nation is making right now. Reinterpreting the United States as a Nazi United States world was really thought-provoking, because you can talk about the cruel, horrible things that happened under the Gestapo, and then you can also talk about Guantanamo Bay, where people are being held, questioned and not charged. There are parallels to certain things that are happening even as we speak that are also as horrible as some of the worst atrocities that have happened in the past. For me, the central political message is 'Don't think it can't happen.'"

Beyond tensions between Germany and Japan – there is a growing belief that the Nazis plan to use a hydrogen bomb on their allies – the focus is on such characters as Juliana Crain (Alexa Davalos), who is given a reel of film by her soon-to-be-murdered half-sister that shows an alternate history in which America won the war that the Nazis will stop at nothing to retrieve; Joe Blake (Luke Kleintank), who claims he wants to join the Resistance, but is actually a Nazi agent; Frank Fink (Rupert Evans), Juliana's boyfriend who is arrested by the Japanese after she disappears; and John Smith (Rufus Sewell), an SS Obergruppenfuhrer investigating the Resistance.

Creating A New America

Beyond the characters, there is also the physical look of the show, which has to pick up the different aesthetics of the US at the time of WWII and project it forward to an altered 1962. "It's hugely challenging, but enormously fun," enthuses Spotnitz. "You have to think about every single thing and how it would be if we'd lost the war. What are the clothes people would wear? What are the cars people would drive? What kind of telephones would people use? What kind of food would they eat?

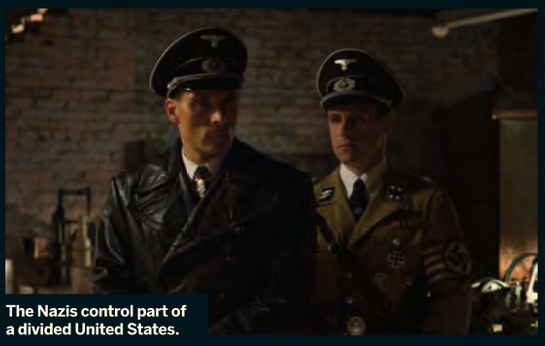
> "YOU HAVE TO THINK ABOUT EVERY SINGLE THING AND HOW IT WOULD BE"
> FRANK SPOTNITZ

What would milk cartons look like? What music would they listen to? What would their cultural references be? How would it be like our world and how would it be different from our world? There's also the danger that you can't make it so different that it would feel unrecognisable."

Helping to answer those questions is Boughton, who like Spotnitz, was drawn in by many of the themes the show deals with and the possibilities it offered. "The thing that immediately popped into my head was Times Square and the idea that it's under Nazi occupation. I'd seen concept art that had been done many times by lots of different people over the years. But I wanted to put the giant neon Coca Cola sign in Times Square into a blender with a swastika flag. We did that. We made this giant red sign that was not a Coca Cola sign. Instead, it was a giant swastika.

The Man In The High Castle takes place in an alternate America, where tensions are high.

In this world, paranoia is high and no one is safe.



The Nazis control part of a divided United States.

TESSA ON PHILIP

WORDS CRISPIN ANDREWS

Tessa Dick was Philip's fifth wife – from 1973-77 – having married at 18. During those four years, Dick wrote *A Scanner Darkly* and *Radio Free Albemuth*, and published *Confessions Of A Crap Artist*, *Deus Irae* and *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said*.

An author herself, we were lucky enough to talk to Tessa about her memories of him, and what he thought of *The Man In The High Castle*.

What are your favourite Philip K Dick stories?

I like those stories where there's something that's not immediately obvious. In *Ubik*, the world deteriorates and they have this Ubik substance to combat the deterioration. This story shows how everything can be useful, even old advertising fliers. Ubik was a metaphor for God – it only took the form of a foam, so people could understand it. As Philip used to say: "You can find God in the trash and the gutter."

A Scanner Darkly isn't an anti-drugs book. It's really about President Nixon's war on drugs and how the illegal drug problem got worse as a result of the President's campaign. Phil was trying to show how the war on drugs created more addicts and criminals, and didn't address the problem. In the book, the rehab centre turns out to be where they're making the drugs.

What did Philip think of The Man In The High Castle?

It was close to his attempt at mainstream literature. He really wanted to write a thriller, not a Stephen King, more a Raymond Chandler – a mystery with a detective. He was working up to that, but never got there.

Wasn't there going to be a sequel?

He planned to. In *High Castle*, the Japanese have won World War II, and are dominating the western coast of America. The sequel would have been about the Nazi domination of the East Coast. But when he researched the Nazis, he got so sick and horrified at what they did that he couldn't write it.

What do you think of the TV show?

I saw the pilot episode, it's quite good. There are a lot of changes from the book, but there has to be changes for the screen. I think Philip would have approved.

Did he see himself as more than just a science fiction writer?

He was a student of philosophy. He loved Ancient Greek philosophers, how they taught us about maths and science. The last thing he said to our son Christopher was, "They play." He believed you shouldn't take life so seriously that you can't enjoy it. But he also realised that we lived in a world where so many innocents – children and animals, even plants – suffered. He believed that it's our job to make the world as good as we possibly could and hope the next life is better. He wanted a good life for himself and for all of us, but he didn't believe you can really enjoy yourself if the people around you are suffering.

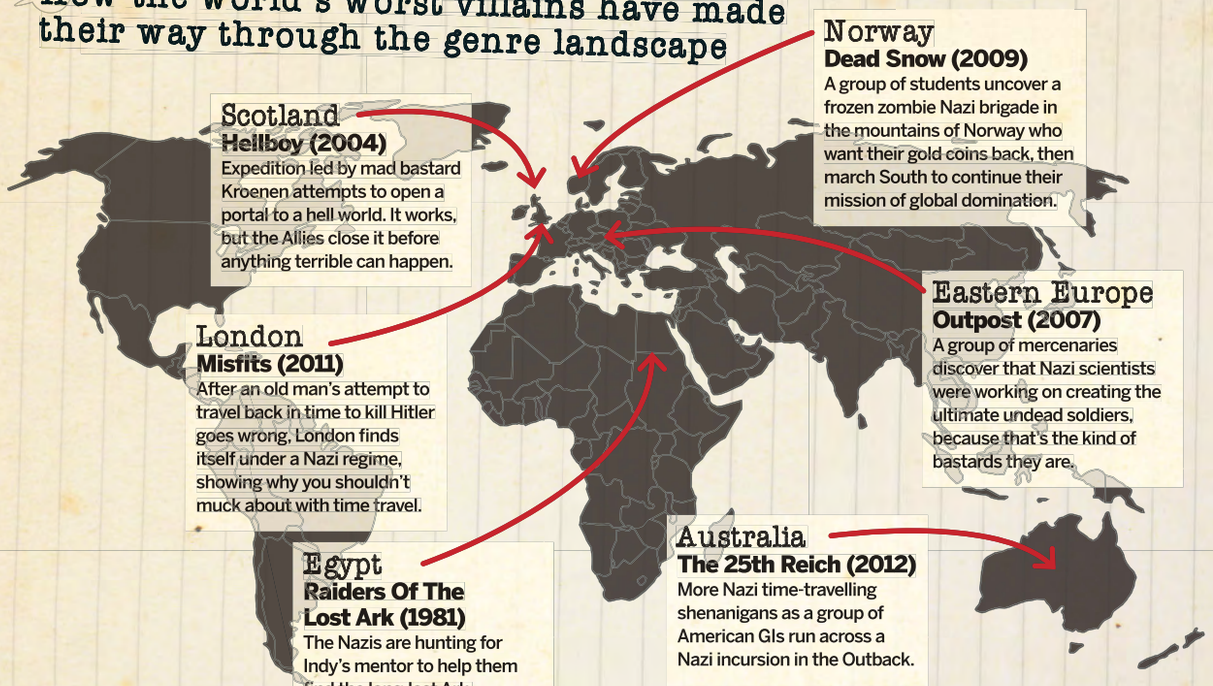
Did Philip really believe he was being got at by the authorities?

Absolutely, and I think he was right. There was some kind of electromagnetic attack on our apartment one time. You would have thought it was haunted. When we looked in the vacant apartment next door we found all sorts of electronic equipment, including a reel-to-reel tape recorder and a tapped phone line.

Also, someone presenting himself as a government agent told him they would put codes in his novels, but he didn't want to go along with that. The idea was as an author, Phil could travel to and from the Soviet Union and carry copies of his books containing coded messages for US operatives. He refused, and they told him they'd kill him and replace him with a lookalike. That's when he fled to Canada.

NAZIS... I HATE THESE GUYS

How the world's worst villains have made their way through the genre landscape



Scotland
Hellboy (2004)
Expedition led by mad bastard Kroenen attempts to open a portal to a hell world. It works, but the Allies close it before anything terrible can happen.

Norway
Dead Snow (2009)
A group of students uncover a frozen zombie Nazi brigade in the mountains of Norway who want their gold coins back, then march South to continue their mission of global domination.

London
Misfits (2011)
After an old man's attempt to travel back in time to kill Hitler goes wrong, London finds itself under a Nazi regime, showing why you shouldn't muck about with time travel.

Eastern Europe
Outpost (2007)
A group of mercenaries discover that Nazi scientists were working on creating the ultimate undead soldiers, because that's the kind of bastards they are.

Egypt
Raiders Of The Lost Ark (1981)
The Nazis are hunting for Indy's mentor to help them find the long-lost Ark.

Australia
The 25th Reich (2012)
More Nazi time-travelling shenanigans as a group of American GIs run across a Nazi incursion in the Outback.

Alexa Davalos and Luke Kleintank as Juliana Crain and Joe Blake.

"As I thought about it," he continues, "I was like, 'Well, there's kind of an Americanisation of the Nazi ideology that must necessarily take place in an occupied territory,' as was the case throughout history. Whenever a place is occupied, the occupiers usually attempt some kind cooperation by being open to certain local customs. I could imagine the guy running General Electric who sees what's coming and says, 'I'm going to donate a giant neon swastika to the cause and pay for it.' Then the Nazis are like, 'Oh yeah, you're awesome; go ahead.' Think about Henry Ford, who was an admirer of Hitler and vice versa, and anti-Semitic, and you can imagine a world in which Ford does very well."

He details that, in coming up with the look of the new US, the creative team conducted a number of 'thought experiments' in which they subtracted the things that obviously would not have happened, particularly deeply American things such as Coca Cola, James Dean, the '57 Chevy and Elvis Presley. "If you look at Eastern Europe," says Boughton, "you see things are dour, grey, with no strong colours. There's no joy. Everybody's living in paranoid fear that their next-door neighbour is going to report them to the Stasi. In a way, America has to be more like that, and not what it was, so we subtracted all those elements that were uniquely post-war America that were things we could latch on to."

Also adding to the distinct look of the show was costume designer Audrey Fisher. The way she describes it, when she began reading the script for the show, her mouth began to drop open as her mind was filled with images of what 1962 Nazi Germany would look like. "My brain was singing," she laughs, "I began to imagine what fashion designers would have survived in the Reich and who would be long gone. I figured the seat of fashion, the couture, began to migrate after the war and affected American fashion. As a result, everything basically has frozen in its spot, because there's no outside influences to move it forward in the way it did in our history. In our world, fashion is sort of frozen in the mid-Fifties, which is the perfect spot, because in the Fifties things were very traditional, conventional, very feminine silhouettes, very masculine silhouettes, sort of modest. I was thinking about modesty laws, hygiene laws, those kind of creepy Nazi sort of correctness about what to show and what not to show, and what's appropriate and not appropriate."

The Mystery Of The Film

The alternate reality footage – believed by many to be the handiwork of the so-called 'Man In The High Mountain' – is something the Nazis want to suppress, believing that if its existence became public knowledge, it would inspire the populace to join the Resistance. As such, it's a vital element to the show.

"It'll have a huge impact on Juliana; it's what drives her forwards," Spotnitz explains. "That's the sci-fi aspect of the show, and the excuse to get into these ideas we've been talking about. But I don't want the show to become about sci-fi. It's what the film represents. So we do deal with that, but slowly. Very slowly. The ideas in this book are really challenging, and I think the slower I go, the easier it will be for people to grasp what we're trying to explore."

There's no saying how much time he and his team will have to explore those things, but to some degree he's already got an end game in mind. "I haven't mapped out where everyone is going. But the central characters? Absolutely," he says. "Their journeys was the first thing I thought of. I don't know if the show will go three years or ten years, but I know what the ending is going to be for Juliana. I think that's the lesson I've learned about storytelling. I can

> "I DON'T WANT IT TO BECOME ABOUT SCI-FI. IT'S WHAT THE FILM REPRESENTS"
> FRANK SPOTNITZ

come up with my plot devices and my answers, and everybody online, they're going to have theirs too. But the one thing I uniquely control is the emotional journey of my characters. If that's rich and satisfying, then I'm going to have a good show. That was job one for me when I came up with the pilot.

"I've done a lot of genre shows," Spotnitz closes, "and then I've done cop shows. When you're doing cop shows, it's tough sometimes. You're asking, 'Why am I telling this story? Why is this a worthwhile way for people to spend an hour of their lives?' As a storyteller, you want your story to have some weight, to be worthwhile so that people think about it after it's over. I find it easier for people to identify a theme or an idea when you're doing something in genre."

The Man In The High Castle will air from 20 November on Amazon Prime Instant Video.

Davalos's character is friendly with the Japanese locals.

Also starring is DJ Qualls as factory worker Ed McCarthy.

WHAT IF...

How the future in film could have been very different...

What if...
The Death Star hadn't been blown up?
Darth Vader would have got back on with helping the Emperor maintain order in the galaxy. He might have felt a pang of remorse about Luke's death, but at least Tarkin would have still been around.

What if...
The Nazis hadn't opened the Ark of the Covenant?
Deciding that the best thing to do would be not cracking open the ancient artefact, Belloq gets paid and the Toht transports the Ark back to Berlin. Studies reveal that it can't be opened without people being melted, so it is carefully shelved away and the rest of the war continues as planned.

What if...
Marty hadn't been able to get back to the future?
Jennifer wouldn't have been happy, as he would have had to just stay there. A lot of really awkward hanging around and being stuck in the Fifties. He would have moved away from Hill Valley rather than watching his parents grow old.

What if...
John and Sarah Connor had properly destroyed SkyNet?
Having stopped any chance of SkyNet driving the human race into extinction, Sarah and her son reconnect. She uses her bad-ass survival skills to take him on some razor's edge experience, and we don't have to sit through *Genysis*.

What if...
Tony Stark had made it safely out of the fun-vee?
Having been rescued without seeing what his weapons do to people, Tony returns to his playboy lifestyle and the Avengers happen without him. Obadiah, frustrated by his failed attempt to whack his protégé, opens his own pizza business in New York.

What if...
Rick Deckard was a replicant?
Actually...

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Steve

Steve Wright
Deputy Editor

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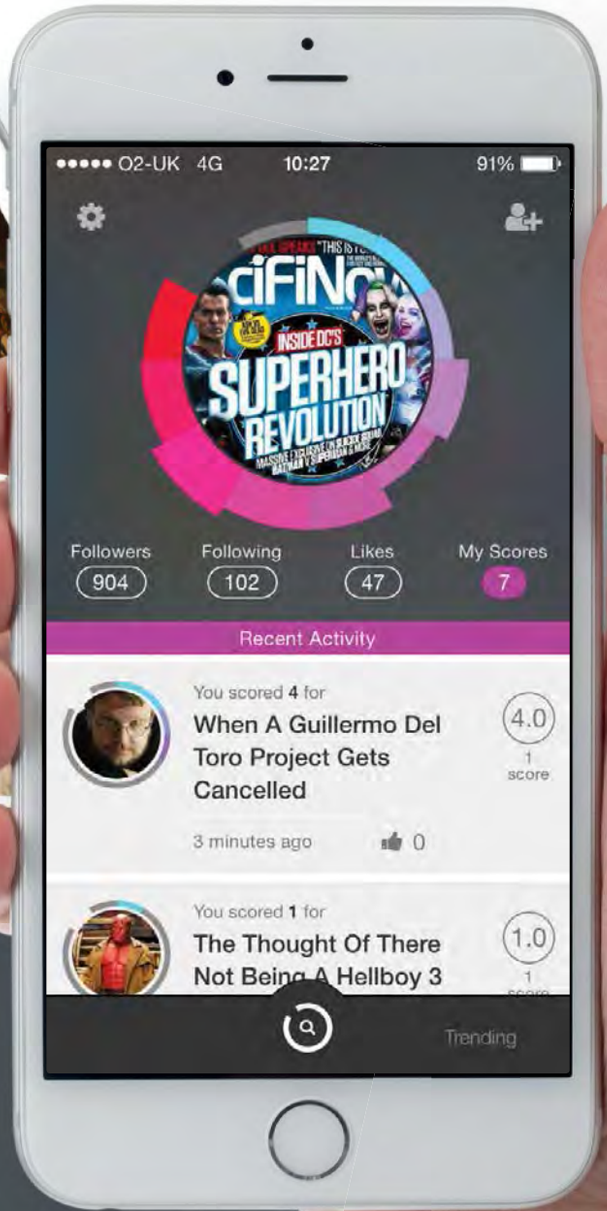

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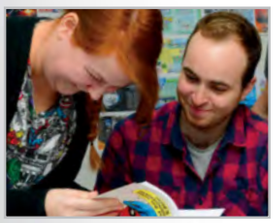

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SciFiNow PICK OF THE SCORES...

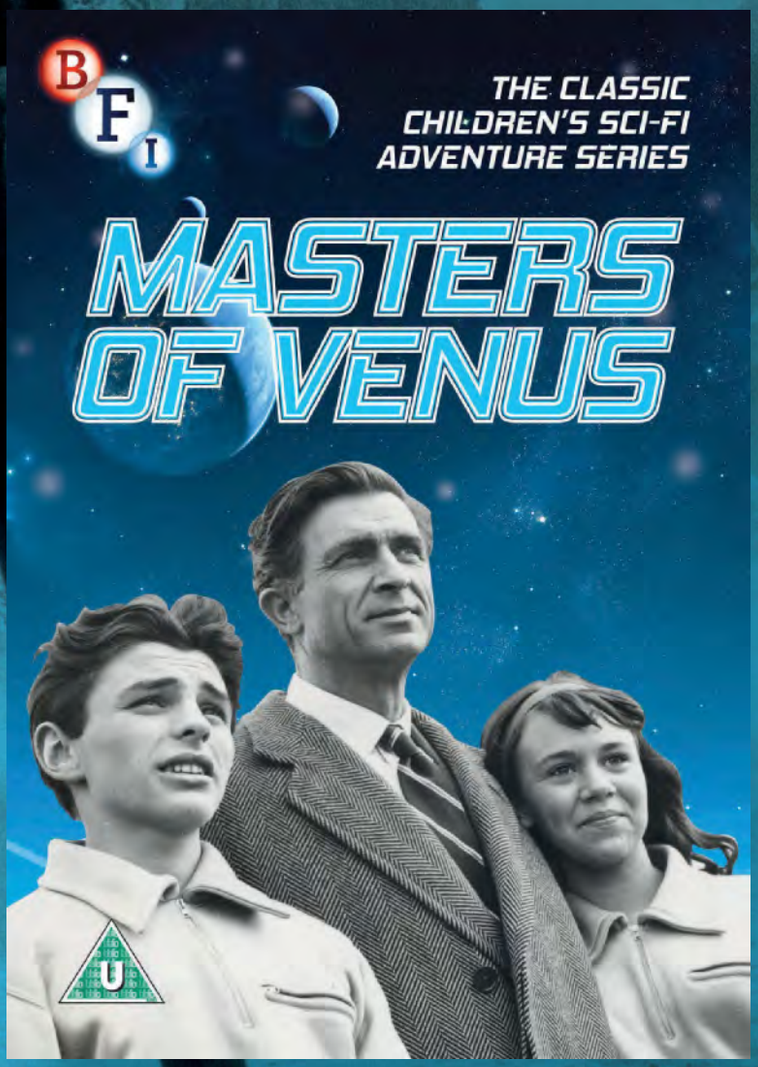
Take aim

You can score absolutly anything on Just a Score. Our favourite this month was seeing how you rated Guillermo del Toro's movies...

- 9 — SciFiNow scored **9** for Pan's Labyrinth
- 8 — SciFiNow scored **8** for Hellboy
- 7 — SciFiNow scored **7** for Pacific Rim
- 4 — SciFiNow scored **4** for When a Del Toro project gets cancelled
- 3 — SciFiNow scored **3** for Mimic
- 1 — SciFiNow scored **1** for The thought of there not being a Hellboy 3

BFI Film Forever

OUT OF THIS WORLD SCI-FI



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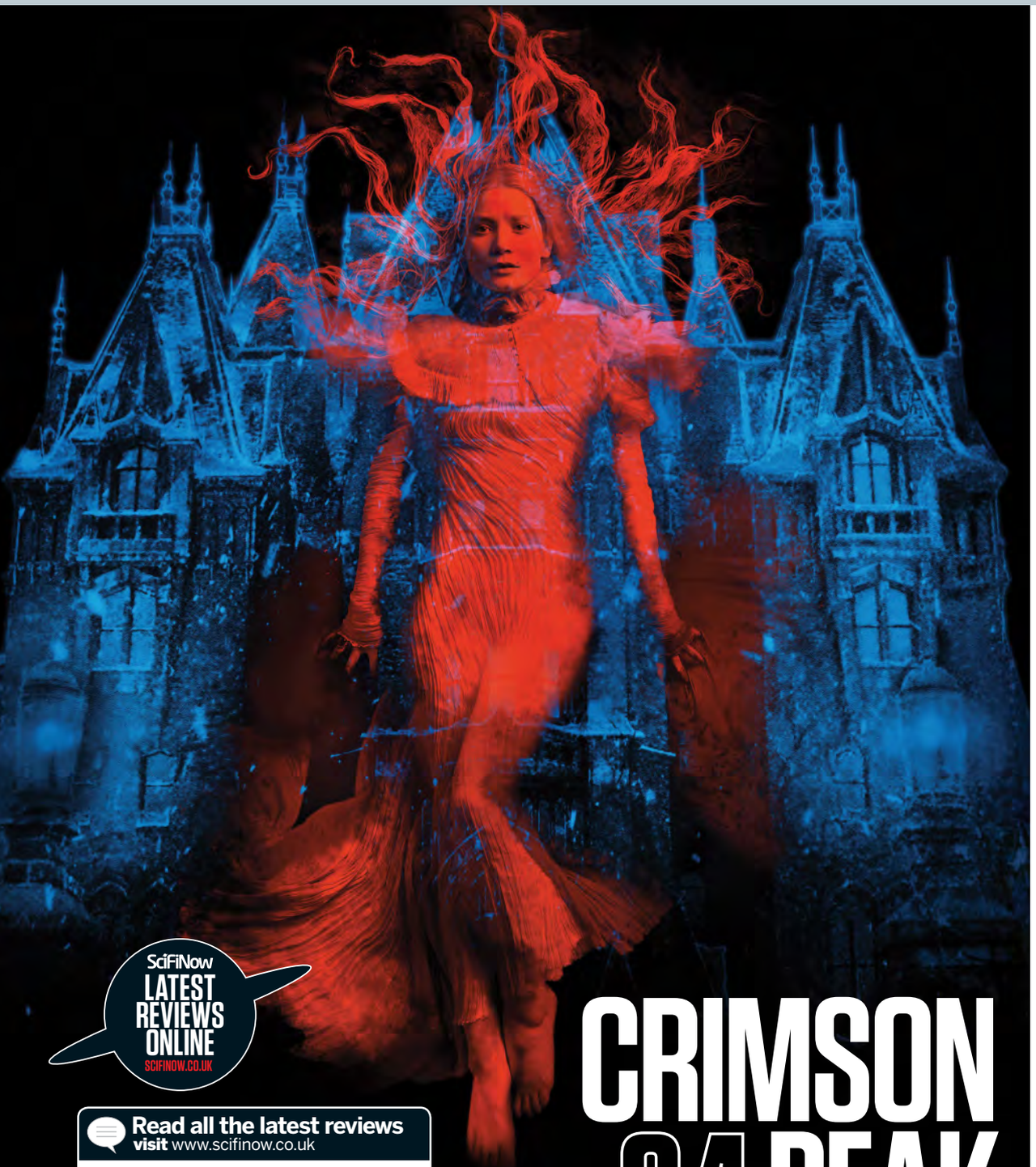

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AWARD EXPLAINED THE 'MUST SEE NOW' AWARD GOES TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE EIGHT OR MORE...

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CRIMSON 64 PEAK

"BEAUTIFUL, SCARY AND AN ABSOLUTE TREAT FOR FANS OF THE GOTHIC GENRE"

TRIVIA *CRIMSON PEAK* WAS SHOT IN JUST 68 DAYS.

FILM INFO

Released
Out now
Certificate
15
Director
Guillermo del Toro
Screenwriters
Guillermo del Toro, Matthew Robbins
Cast
Mia Wasikowska, Tom Hiddleston, Jessica Chastain, Charlie Hunnam, Jim Beaver
Distributor
Universal
Running Time
119 mins

CRIMSON PEAK

The house on haunted Hiddleston

SciFiNow Must see now!

There's nothing quite like a Guillermo del Toro film. He's a true auteur whose work is unmistakable and, as his films have gotten bigger, they've stayed just as personal, using those greater resources to totally immerse himself in the world of the genre he's exploring. Hence *Pacific Rim*'s giddy excitement about being a massive movie about massive robots punching massive aliens.

Del Toro has made a Gothic romance that is a painstaking and operatic tribute to films like *Rebecca*, *The Innocents* and even *Jane Eyre*. Tropes like the literally buried secrets, calculating aristocrats and messages of dire warning are deployed with absolute love and sincerity. The reverence with which he approaches and pays homage to those reference points may alienate some, but for those who love the genre, or are willing to be carried away by the filmmaker's undeniable skill, this is an utterly beautiful and gloriously creepy film.

In turn-of-the-century New York, young author Edith Cushing (Mia Wasikowska) is struggling to convince publishers to take her ghost stories seriously. After all, she's seen them all her life. The tall, dark and handsome Sir Thomas Sharpe (Tom Hiddleston) is taken with Edith's writing, but more so with her, and it becomes apparent that he not only hopes to return to England with funds for the invention that could save his fortune, but with a new bride. Their attraction is mutual, and after a tragic turn of events Edith quickly marries Thomas and travels with him and his icy sister Lucille (Jessica Chastain) to the north of England and the cavernous (and definitely haunted) Allerdale Hall.

She's warned that certain parts of the house are unsafe, and as the weather worsens, Edith realises that the unquiet spirits of the house aren't the only things she needs to worry about.

Crimson Peak is a stunning sensory experience. The cinematography, production design and costumes are impossibly beautiful, and Allerdale Hall, where blood-red clay oozes from every surface, is a triumph. The omnipresence of that red clay borders on the absurd as it runs from the faucets, drips down the walls, and seeps up from the floorboards. However, del Toro's almost confrontational use of it is in perfect synchronicity with the rest of the film. Everything is heightened, the dead are with us, and warnings and signifiers are everywhere.

That goes for the eroticism and violence too, as the traditionally innocent heroine is given a sex drive, and there are some surprisingly brutal gory shocks. As much as *Crimson Peak* is a Gothic romance rather than a haunted house movie, it is absolutely terrifying when it wants to be, and the spectres are wonderfully designed.

Great actors are needed to make an impact in such an environment, and *Crimson Peak* has them. The cast clearly enjoys working within the genre types, but each delivers a complex take on those staples. Wasikowska is on very good form, bringing a welcome backbone and intelligence to Edith, while Hiddleston is seductive and secretive, but adds a warmth and fragility to Thomas that surprises. Chastain, meanwhile, walks away with the film, delivering a wonderful performance that lands just on the right side of ham.

It's likely that some viewers won't connect with the rich world that del Toro has conjured, but we fell in love with it almost immediately. Beautiful, scary and a treat for fans of the Gothic genre, *Crimson Peak* is a stunning achievement.

Jonathan Hatfull

9 SciFiNow scored **9** for Crimson Peak
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

GOTHIC HEROINES

These ladies got more than they bargained for

Mrs de Winter
Rebecca (1940)
Marrying Maxim de Winter and moving to Xanadu seems like a good idea to our unnamed heroine (Joan Fontaine), but he's got secrets and an evil housekeeper.

Eleanor Lance
The Haunting (1963)
Poor Nell (Julie Harris) is excited about travelling to Hill House to help prove if it's haunted or not, but she quickly realises that this isn't a holiday.

Miss Giddens
The Innocents (1961)
This young governess (Deborah Kerr) uncovers a nasty little secret about her predecessor and the old groundsman, but what does it have to do with the children?

Jane Eyre
Jane Eyre (2011)
The titular governess (Mia Wasikowska) moves to the house of the irascible Rochester (Michael Fassbender) and begins to soften his heart… but what's in the attic?

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...

Rebecca
Joan Fontaine discovers husband Laurence Olivier has some secrets in Alfred Hitchcock's film of Du Maurier's classic.

TRIVIA MIA WASIKOWSKA AND TOM HIDDLESTON REPLACED EMMA STONE AND BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH RESPECTIVELY.

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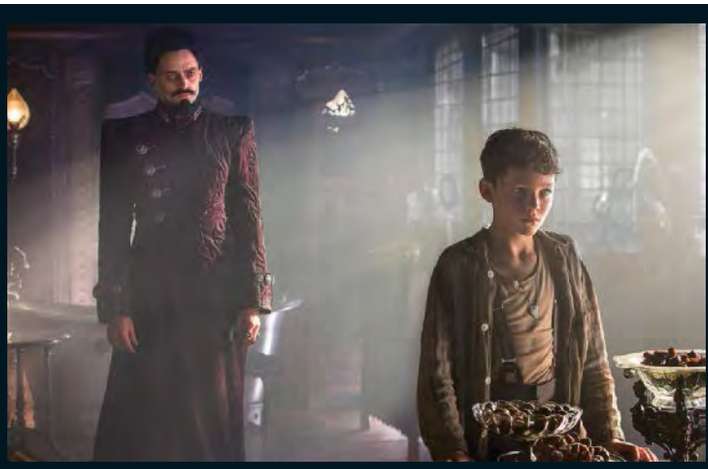
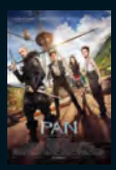


PAN Peter Pants

Details PG // 111 mins // Out now **Director** Joe Wright **Screenwriter** Jason Buchs
Cast Rooney Mara, Hugh Jackman, Levi Miller, Garrett Hedlund
Distributor Warner Brothers



This steampunk-style *Peter Pan* origin story, directed by Joe Wright and written by Jason Buchs, plays out like an old school Hollywood adventure with a dash of *Les Misérables*. For all its eye-catching design, however, *Pan* sorely lacks a much-needed sense of wonderment, and by focusing its efforts on the outlandish it forgets to be playful.

A group of orphaned boys from a blitzed World War II London are kidnapped and taken to a strange new world, where a chorus of men sing Nirvana's iconic *Smells Like Teen Spirit* as if it was their national anthem. But as the boys continue to disappear into this gaudy land and further from reality, the momentum unfortunately dissipates too.

Confident newcomer Levi Miller approaches the character of Peter as if he has emerged from the pages of *Oliver Twist*. He's a cocky Artful Dodger type who sneaks around the orphanage searching for hidden rations. He appears alongside a booming Hugh Jackman, who takes on the role of pirate Blackbeard – the man in charge of stealing young boys so they can mine pixie-dust for his anti-aging needs. Garrett Hedlund is a wise-cracking young Hook who resembles Indiana Jones and takes Peter under his wing, while also flirting outrageously with Tiger Lily (Rooney Mara, seemingly dressed as Glastonbury music festival). Highlights include Kathy Burke having lots of fun as an evil nun with a serious grudge against Peter, and Adeel Akhtar (*Utopia*) as Smee, adding some comic relief with his clueless one-liners.

Pan rifles through too many literary and cinematic influences, borrowing from Terry Gilliam's oeuvre, *The Chronicles Of Narnia* and *The Buccaneer*, but it never quite manages to thread these things together convincingly enough to entirely pull it off. It instead arduously moves along from one shiny set piece to another, feeling overstuffed and occasionally looking hideous. There is one gloriously designed stop-motion sequence that recalls the work of the Quay brothers, but sadly magical moments like this are far too scarce.

Katherine McLaughlin

SciFiNow scored **5** for Pan
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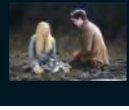
OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Stardust
A magical adventure based on Gaiman's novel, which sees a young man embark on a quest to find a fallen star.

MAZE RUNNER: THE SCORCH TRIALS Cranks up the volume

Details 12 // 132 mins // Out now **Director** Wes Ball **Screenwriter** TS Nowlin **Cast** Dylan O'Brien, Kaya Scodelario, Thomas Brodie-Sangster, Ki Hong Lee, Rosa Salazar, Giancarlo Esposito, Patricia Clarkson, Aidan Gillen **Distributor** 20th Century Fox

Maze Runner smoothly transforms into *The Scorch Trials*, picking up from where it left off a year ago. Now they've finally escaped the maze, Thomas (Dylan O'Brien), Teresa (Kaya Scodelario) and pals find themselves in a futuristic underground compound among hundreds of others. But even after being cleaned up, fed and generally cared for by the apparently harmless compound staff, the group have a hard time trusting them. Fleeing the base, they find themselves running once more in an attempt to find out what evil corporation WCKD are up to, if they can be trusted and, most importantly, if the group should be fearing for their lives.

After not much story or character exploration from its predecessor, *The Scorch Trials* makes more of an effort to really sink its teeth into the world of James Dashner's YA novel series. Admittedly, the character exploration could still go deeper, but the story starts to open up a lot more – though vastly different from the original plotline of the book – and we get to see more of the world beyond the maze, which has become almost unrecognisable, scorched by the Sun and a breeding ground for Cranks.

A lot of the excitement comes from the existence of the Cranks, humans who have been infected by the mysterious Flare virus. Aside from them, *Scorch Trials* is more or less a Point A-B movie with an element of mystery, seeing as the group don't really know what Point B is just yet. Run-ins with WCKD helicopters, more Cranks and hidden communities make it a lot more interesting than when they spent their days dodging Grievers.

The young cast is strong but unremarkable. They carry the film well enough, but don't particularly stand out. But the older cast is rather special. *Game Of Thrones*' Aidan Gillen is charming, sinister and wonderfully Irish as Janson, the man in charge of the underground compound; Giancarlo Esposito makes for an intriguing can-we-trust-him father figure as Jorge, and Patricia Clarkson is on form as always as WCKD head honcho Ava Paige. There's also a fun appearance from *Firefly*'s Alan Tudyk as eye-linered, ring-fingered, permanently intoxicated rave club owner Marcus.

Unless *The Death Cure* is mind-blowing, it's unlikely that *The Scorch Trials* will be remembered long into the future or have as much of an impact as *The Hunger Games* has, but it makes for a fun ride nonetheless.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

SciFiNow scored **7** for Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...

Mad Max: Fury Road
Set in the future Australian outback, it's a fun dystopian road trip, only with no teenagers.

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TRIVIA *TRUE GRIT* STAR HAILEE STEINFELD AUDITIONED FOR THE ROLE OF BRENDA, ULTIMATELY LOSING OUT TO ROSA SALAZAR.

DARTMOOR KILLING
Murder on the moors

Details 15 // 94 mins // Out now **Director** Peter Nicholson **Screenwriters** Isabelle Grey, Peter Nicholson **Cast** Rebecca Night, Gemma-Leah Devereux, Callum Blue **Distributor** Dartmoor Killing Ltd

In 2012, Katie Aselton, along with Mark Duplass, tackled the survival horror from the female perspective in *Black Rock*. It's not without its problems, but the friendship aspect of the trio of women fending off a group of hunters always rang true. Director Peter Nicholson, along with co-writer Isabelle Grey, approach the sub-genre with a Mills and Boon-type sensibility, mixing psychological issues and betrayal with an undercurrent of eroticism, but it falls short in its attempts to portray a convincing relationship between two best friends.

Susan (Rebecca Night) gifts her best friend Becky (Gemma-Leah Devereux) with a hike across the moors in celebration of her upcoming nuptials. But the pair are both hiding secrets from one another, which leads to a disturbing set of events unfolding. Enter a tall dark stranger in the form of local guide Chris (Callum Blue), and another wedge is driven between them as they spend the night at his farmhouse. As soon as Becky enters the premises, she starts suffering from flashbacks that point to an ominous event.

There's little sense of urgency as the pair slog across the moors or try to escape from death. Though attempts to upend expectations are made through the characters' motivations, they often fall into farce. In one instance, a frightening grand reveal is followed by the two women taking a nap instead of frantically panicking. Any semblance of tension is removed here by the fact that no one seems genuinely scared, and many of their decisions are made in a slow or awkward fashion. There's no arguing that Nicholson takes stunning shots of the surrounding landscape, and the appearance of David Hayman as Chris's father is a welcome addition, but the story isn't up to scratch.

A dubious ending goes for a cheap twist that is perplexing in its treatment of the word 'victim', and feels more suited to a late night *Hollyoaks* special. *Dartmoor Killing* is not without merit, but the shallow handling of serious issues – including the repression of a tragic incident – mars it somewhat.

Katherine McLaughlin

SciFiNow scored **3** for Dartmoor Killing

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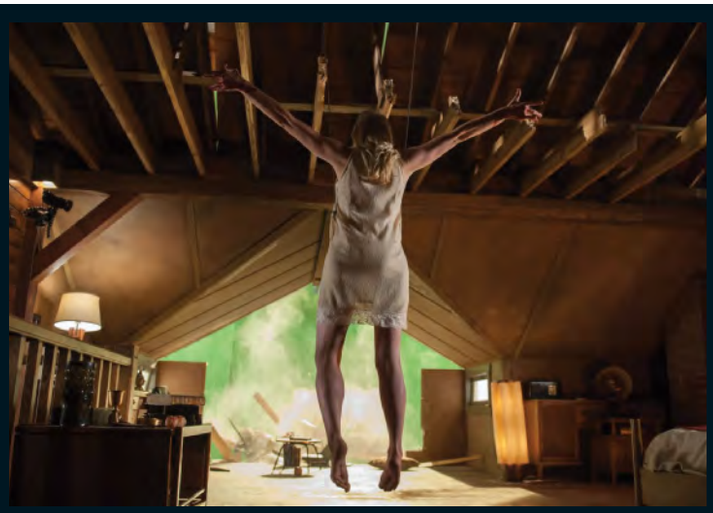
OR STAY IN AND WATCH...

The Descent
A claustrophobic and tense caving horror from Neil Marshall that features a strong female cast.



THE VATICAN TAPES
Ghosts of Rome

Details 15 // 89 mins // 30 October **Director** Mark Neveldine **Screenwriters** Christopher Borrelli, Michael C Martin **Cast** Olivia Taylor Dudley, Michael Peña, Dougray Scott, Djimon Hounsou, Peter Andersson, Kathleen Robertson **Distributor** Lionsgate

Don't be put off by the title – this enjoyable exorcism thriller wisely ditches the over-played found-footage element in favour of a straightforward narrative, with the odd bit of CCTV footage thrown in.

The Vatican Tapes opens with two serious-looking Cardinals (Peter Andersson and Djimon Hounsou) looking at some top-secret Vatican video tapes of a possessed woman. We then flash back a few months and meet 27 year-old Angela (Olivia Dudley Taylor), who has just finished a blog post on the Antichrist.

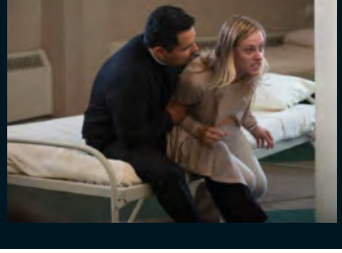
After accidentally cutting herself while slicing her birthday cake, Angela begins behaving strangely, eventually causing a car accident that lands her in a 40-day coma, much to the consternation of her religious father (Dougray Scott) and nice-guy boyfriend (John Patrick Amedori). When she miraculously regains consciousness, it isn't long before various bodies start piling up in her immediate vicinity, prompting priest Father Lozano (Michael Peña) to summon the Vatican for a time-honoured exorcism.

Taylor is good value as Angela, slipping comfortably between sympathetic vulnerability and spine-chilling evil, while Andersson is a lot of fun as the Germanic, over-explaining exorcist. That said, Peña is disappointingly underused, mostly reduced to frowning a lot.

Making his solo debut after co-directing the *Crank* movies, Neveldine directs with a distinct style, heightened by Gerardo Madrazo's pin-sharp cinematography. Similarly, he orchestrates some effectively nasty moments (a scene involving lightbulbs is particularly wince-inducing) and even manages to add an original element to the exorcism sequences by having Angela vomit up a holy trinity of hard-boiled eggs. In addition, the film builds to an enjoyably bonkers finale that sets up an intriguing-looking sequel.

In short, this is an enjoyable creepy exorcism thriller that compensates for its derivative elements with some decent scares and a great ending.

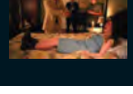
Matthew Turner



SciFiNow scored **6** for The Vatican Tapes

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



The Last Exorcism
This documentary-style horror exposes fake exorcisms – until coming across the real thing.

TRIVIA THE SCREENPLAY FOR *THE VATICAN TAPES* WAS FEATURED IN THE 2009 BLACK LIST, AN ANNUAL HOLLYWOOD-PRODUCED LIST OF THE YEAR'S 'MOST LIKED' UNMADE SCRIPTS.

FILM INFO

Released
Out now
Certificate
12A
Director
Ridley Scott
Screenwriter
Drew Goddard
Cast
Matt Damon, Jessica Chastain, Jeff Daniels, Kristen Wiig, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Michael Pena, Kate Mara, Sean Bean
Distributor
20th Century Fox
Running Time
141 mins

THE MARTIAN

SciFiNow Must see now!

Mars attacks

Tales of humans over-reaching and messing up are the norm. If we're not triggering the apocalypse or tampering with that which should not be tampered, we're finding another way to make a hash of things. It's therefore reassuring to have a film like *The Martian* come along, showing the capacity of mankind to face overwhelming odds with can-do spirit and a quip to hand.

Even so, from the outset Ridley Scott seemed like an odd choice for the film. Ever since his heyday, his more recent films like *Body Of Lies*, *Prometheus* and *The Counselor* share the distinction of polarising their audience. One unifying factor is that he rarely makes us laugh. His films are sombre affairs, with the comedic elements feeling awkward. Here, paired with *Buffy* screenwriter Drew Goddard, he has helmed his first truly funny film.

But that's far from all there is to *The Martian*. Seeing astronaut Mark Watney (Matt Damon) stranded on Mars while Mission Control frets about how to bring him back and his crew mates proceed home unawares, we bear witness to humanity's survival instinct at the most calm, methodical and mathematical that you'll ever see it. While the likes of *Apollo 13* and *Castaway* were all about escape, Watney is more focused on endurance, making full use of the surroundings to prolong his own existence for as long as necessary.

As far as leads go, Damon is almost as much of a safe bet as it's possible to get. Given the opportunity to showcase his charisma and screen presence via a series of video-diary entries, he makes it nigh-on impossible not to cheer him on as he comes up with assorted creative solutions to his conundrum (growing potatoes with the assistance of fertiliser made from his own faecal matter, for instance), all the while accompanied by the disco soundtrack that he reluctantly works along to.

Yet even he can't carry an entire movie by himself. Back on Earth, we bear witness to a four-way sparring battle as Jeff Daniels, Kristen Wiig, Chiwetel Ejiofor and Sean Bean cross verbal swords over how to manage the situation. Of the four, Daniels is arguably most memorable as NASA head Teddy Sanders, forced by default into a quasi-antagonistic role as the man in charge of balancing the mission to rescue Mark with the need to safeguard the rest of the crew. Coupled with a number of scene-stealing cameos – particularly Donald 'Childish Gambino' Glover as wunderkid Rich Purnell – and you have a dynamic that is just as engaging as the events in space.

It's the crew of the Ares 3 who are the most short-changed. While all have their banter and character quirks, only Chastain is truly fleshed out as the guilt-ridden mission leader Melissa Lewis – it would have been nice to have seen more of their dynamic and camaraderie before they were separated. Some may also find Watney a tad too cheerful for someone stranded millions of miles away from home, but then others might appreciate the gallows humour on show. It all depends on whether you'd find this kind of attitude believable in such a situation. If you do (like we did), it shouldn't be too much of a problem.

Combined with the kind of breathtaking cinematography that gave the director his name, and a sense of diluted optimism, you have a film that sails through its lengthy run time. It will likely polarise, but it has definitely won us over.

Steve Wright

SciFiNow scored **8** for The Martian

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

BOURNE-AGAIN SF STAR

We look Damon's most memorable genre roles

Interstellar (2014)
A surprise appearance in Christopher Nolan's most recent epic, Damon easily steals the show.

Elysium (2013)
Its sixth-form politics meant it didn't quite match up to *District 9*, but Damon is excellent in it nonetheless.

The Zero Theorem (2013)
Going against type, Damon is the ultimate form of bureaucracy in Terry Gilliam's latest directorial outing.

The Adjustment Bureau (2011)
Damon is a wannabe senator who stumbles somewhere he shouldn't in this Philip K Dick adaptation.

Titan AE (2000)
Once again, Damon is the key to the survival of the human race in this animated adventure.

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...

Apollo 13
Tom Hanks and company try to stay alive in space after a Moon trek goes badly wrong.

TRIVIA *THE MARTIAN* IS FILMED IN THE SAME LOCATION AS FELLOW MARS-SET MOVIE *RED PLANET*.

BACK TO THE FUTURE FLUX CAPACITOR BOXSET

SciFiNow Must see now!

Still 88MPH

Details PG // 327 mins // 1985/2015 // Blu-ray // **Released** Out now
Director Robert Zemeckis **Cast** Michael J Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson, Crispin Glover, Thomas F Wilson **Distributor** Universal Pictures UK

Back To The *Future* is a pretty much perfect movie. You'd be hard-pushed finding a sci-fi fan who doesn't love it. In honour of the film's 30th anniversary – and indeed Future Day on 21 October – you can love it all over again with the *Back To The Future 30th Anniversary* trilogy boxset. Interviews, documentaries and all new footage prove just how timeless the series is.

The 2015 Message from Doc Brown and *Doc Brown Saves The World* brings back an older and suited-up Christopher Lloyd for 15 minutes of hilarious frowning and spluttering. The 20-minute *Outatime* documentary is an interesting watch as some of the crew talk us through restoring the film's original DeLorean. *Looking Back To The Future* takes unseen footage from the set of *Part I*, and explores the script, Hill Valley, the film's score, casting Marty McFly and prepping for the Johnny B Goode scene in a collection of short but fabulous featurettes with interviews with Lloyd, Michael J Fox, Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale and more.

Tongue-in-cheek ads for hover boards and *Jaws 19* ("*Cyber Jaws* made you afraid to log on, and *Robo Jaws* made you afraid to have robotic sharks...") are absolutely brilliant and add a whole new layer to *Back To The Future Part II*.

However, UK fans have been short-changed slightly. Where the US gets an eight-disc boxed set, we only get four discs; we're missing all but two episodes of the animated *Back To The Future* series. If you've seen it all already, or just don't give a damn about it, it's peaches and cream for you. But for those who were looking forward to getting their hands on the full series, two episodes is kind of disappointing.

Come on, Universal. There's no need for that.

While everything on offer is quality material, there isn't actually that much. Maybe they're saving more behind-the-scenes footage for the *40th Anniversary* boxset. Maybe that's it. But getting to see the series in high-definition and the stunning Flux Capacitor packaging make it a must for life-long fans, even if the price is a little steep.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

10 SciFiNow scored **10** for Back To The Future Flux Capacitor Boxset
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

FAQs About Time Travel
Three friends find a time rift in their local's toilets.

LET US PRAY

Please allow me to introduce myself...

Details 18 // 88 mins // 2014 // DVD • **Digital Download** // **Released** Out now
Director Brian O'Malley **Cast** Liam Cunningham, Pollyanna McIntosh, Douglas Russell **Distributor** Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment

"Now it's a pale fuckin' horse," snarls Liam Cunningham's nameless but most definitely sinister stranger, who drifts off storm-wracked cliffs and into a one horse Scottish town in the middle of the night, and straight into the cells of the local police station, where DI Rachel Heggie (Pollyanna McIntosh) is having a rough first night. If Rachel thinks that the cops and crooks here are bad, this stranger knows they are, and he's going to make them pay.

There's not much by way of subtlety in Brian O'Malley's Irish-made debut, but it's not short on style or menace. *Let Us Prey* nods heavily towards John Carpenter (never a tactic that's led anyone too far astray), and it's heavy on synths, limited locations and dread. Cunningham is excellent (and is clearly having fun) as the man with a list and a fondness for oblique biblical references, while McIntosh puts in another strong performance as the by-the-book rookie dealing with a town where everybody is... unpleasant.

The conclusion wobbles but this packs a grim, nasty punch for those who like their midnight movies atmospheric, gory and unremittingly bleak.

Jonathan Hatfull

7 SciFiNow scored **7** for Let Us Pray
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

V/H/S: VIRAL

First person screamer

Details 18 // 82 mins // 2014 // DVD • **VOD** // **Released** Out now **Director** Various
Cast Justin Welborn, Marian Álvarez, Gustavo Salmerón, Patrick Lawrie
Distributor Koch Media

Three years after *V/H/S* premiered with reports of Sundance audience members fainting, the found-footage horror anthology series comes to a close (for now) with this patchy but fun effort. Much like the previous entries, some of the shorts are better than others, although it's worth noting that the wrap-around (from *Deadgirl*'s Marcel Sarmiento) is stronger than its predecessors. Gregg Bishop's (*Dance Of The Dead*) 'Dante The Great' is an entertaining, gory and inventive tale of a magician who finds a genuinely magic cape.

Spring filmmakers Justin Benson and Aaron Moorhead channel the relentless carnage of videogame beat 'em ups to good effect with skaters vs Mexican zombies short 'Bonestorm.' Best of the lot is *Timecrimes* writer-director Nacho Vigalondo's hilarious 'Parallel Monsters,' in which two scientists walk into each other's dimensions and find some... upsetting differences.

There's nothing particularly scary here, and we'd say it's the weakest of the *V/H/S* series, but there's enough twisted creativity and energy on display to make it worth a look.

Jonathan Hatfull

6 SciFiNow scored **6** for V/H/S: Viral
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

TRIVIA WHEN WATCHING *BACK TO THE FUTURE*, RONALD REAGAN MADE THE PROJECTIONIST REWIND THE JOKE ABOUT HIM BECAUSE HE MISSED SOME OF THE DIALOGUE FROM LAUGHING SO HARD.

JUST A SCORE
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Download on the App Store

TERMINATOR GENISYS Sky-nap

Details 12 // 125 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray · DVD // **Released** Out now
Director Alan Taylor **Cast** Arnold Schwarzenegger, Emilia Clarke, Jai Courtney
Distributor Paramount Home Entertainment

When it comes to new releases based on existing properties, we're used to praising the performances of the cast in the face of the limitations of an often perfunctory script. In the case of *Terminator Genisys*, the problem is almost the reverse. While we wouldn't go as far as to say the writing is anything special – it's ambitious, even if it doesn't always seem quite sure what it's aiming for – it is badly let down by its lead cast.

Chiefly culpable are Emilia Clarke and Jai Courtney. Taking on the roles of sci-fi icons like Sarah Connor and Kyle Reese is a daunting proposition, admittedly, but neither come anywhere close to making them their own. Clarke displays none of the deadly viper-imbued gravitas she wields in *Game Of Thrones*, and Courtney continues his inexplicable upward career trajectory. Of the leads, only Arnold Schwarzenegger is on his A-game, while JK Simmons is a breath of fresh air in regrettably small doses.

Elements of the film really do work well, and there's definitely potential for a good film in there somewhere. Still, this has to count as a missed opportunity.

Steve Wright

4 SciFiNow scored **4** for Terminator Genisys
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

TURBO KID BMX bandits

SciFiNow Must see now!

Details 15 // 93 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray · DVD // **Released** Out now
Directors François Simard, Anouk Whissell, Yoann-Karl Whissell **Cast** Munro Chambers, Laurence Lebouef, Michael Ironside **Distributor** Lions Gate Home Entertainment

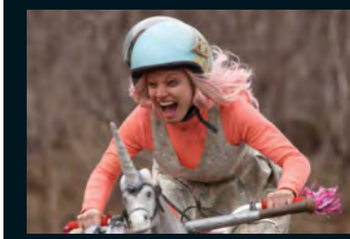
It's tough to get love letters to cheesy films right. They're either winking too much at the camera, embracing the seedier 'grindhouse-style' elements too much, or mimicking their inspiration so completely that they just end up being... kind of naff. But *Turbo Kid* avoids all these pitfalls to deliver a massively entertaining and absolutely blood-soaked heartfelt B-movie tribute.

It's 1997, and the post-apocalypse is a tough place to survive. When The Kid (Munro Chambers) and his maniacally enthusiastic new friend Apple (Laurence Leboeuf) cross paths with water-hogging villain Zeus (Michael Ironside), it's about to go off.

There's a real sweetness to *Turbo Kid* that gives it an unexpected emotional impact. The performances are excellent (particularly Leboeuf, who is hysterical), it's self-aware without being snarky, the gore is incredible, and it's filled with great little touches (the BMX bikes never get old) that keep it fun and funny throughout.

You'll laugh, you'll cheer, and you might even shed a tear. Simply put, *Turbo Kid* is awesome.

Jonathan Hatfull



8 SciFiNow scored **8** for Turbo Kid
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

NARCOPOLIS Not bad trip

Details 15 // 96 mins // 2014 // DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Justin Trefgarne
Cast Elliot Cowan, Elodie Yung, Jonathan Pryce, Robert Bathurst, James Callis
Distributor Altitude Film Distribution

20 years in the future, all recreational drugs are legal and mass-produced. Drugs company giant Todd Ambro (James Callis) has the UK eating out of his hand. What could possibly go wrong?

Havoc soon rips through the London underworld as unlicensed drug-pushers start selling stock to vulnerable customers, who promptly show up dead. When a body is discovered with half his head missing, our hero Frank Grieves (Elliot Cowan), a police officer specially assigned to these drug cases, starts to dig into the evidence. Coming up empty, he somewhat unwillingly teams up with mad scientist Sidorov (Jonathan Pryce), and a young woman named Eva Gray (Elodie Yung), who claims she's not of this time.

Narcopolis looks great. It's stylish sci-fi; the cityscapes are gorgeous and the futuristic special effects top-notch. It's obvious a lot of care, time and creative passion went into it. It's a relatively low-budget project that does a great job pretending it's not. But behind the aesthetics, there isn't much else.

Most mystery movies lay clues out for the viewer. When done right, the clues become a treasure hunt that leaves you bewildered, fascinated and wanting to punch yourself for missing them. But when *Narcopolis* leaves clues lying around, it also sprinkles them with glitter and sticks giant neon signs in them reading 'THIS IS A CLUE'.

Furthermore, over-acting, confusing wording and forced accents stick out like sore thumbs in *Narcopolis*'s understated noir-esque style.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

5 SciFiNow scored **5** for Narcopolis
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IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Blade Runner
Harrison Ford deals with replicants in futuristic LA in this neo-noir sci-fi from Ridley Scott.

TRIVIA *NARCOPOLIS*'S STAR ELODIE YUNG WILL SOON PLAY ELEKTRA IN SEASON TWO OF *DAREDEVIL* ON NETFLIX.

SECONDS

SciFiNow Must see now!

Life at what cost?

Details 15 // 107 mins // 1966 // Blu-ray • DVD // **Released** 26 October **Director** John Frankenheimer **Cast** Rock Hudson, Salome Jens, Will Geer **Distributor** Eureka

Approaching old age and feeling disillusioned with his life, a man is given the chance to start afresh again – just as long as he severs all ties with his past life.

Sound familiar? It should, as a lot of films have clearly drawn a lot of inspiration from it. From *Face/Off* to *Self/Less*, *Seconds*' fingerprints are everywhere, yet it doesn't always get the credit it deserves. While other films focus almost entirely on the hedonistic possibilities that eternal life entails, *Seconds* never forgets its origins. From the get-go, it is a horror movie, detailing science's worst excesses when it focuses on whether it can do something over whether it should do something, to the detriment of everything else.

The film's protagonist, Arthur Hamilton (John Randolph)'s journey comes full circle – he thinks he's prolonging his life, only to realise he's swapping one frying pan from the other. His life in the body of a younger man (Rock Hudson) starts off in truly horrifying fashion: unable to speak, strapped up in a chair and covered in bandages in true Cronenberg fashion. By the end of the film, he's in almost the same situation, the gut-punching ending having lost none of its power 50 years on.

Director John Frankenheimer is best known for character-driven tales of intrigue like *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Birdman Of Alcatraz*, and *Seconds* proves to be the perfect fit for him, and Hudson the perfect actor. The director never stints in showing the ripple effect of Hamilton's actions, all evocatively captured in an expressionistic, dream-like style that calls into question even the most straightforward of exchanges. Similarly, Hudson is perfect, utterly convincing as a man revelling in his newfound youth while similarly at odds with what it all means, not coming to his senses until it's too late.

It's likely that when *Seconds* was made, the future they envisioned was one they had expected us to have reached by now. We're not quite there yet, but it doesn't seem all that unfeasible in an age where the few own the majority. When a film has such timeless relevance, you'd do well to listen.

Steve Wright

SciFiNow scored **9** for Seconds

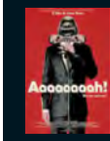
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

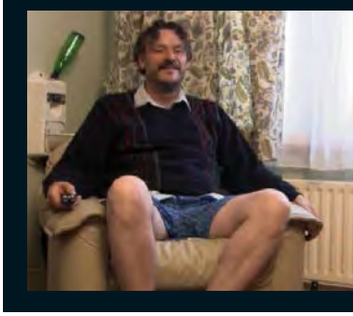
Logan's Run
Life is full of carefree fun – up until the age of 30, when your existence must come to an end.

AAAAAAAAH! Monkey business

Details 18 // 79 mins // 2015 // Digital Download // **Released** Out now **Director** Steve Oram **Cast** Steve Oram, Julian Rhind-Tutt, Lucy Honigman, Toyah Wilcox **Distributor** Film4



'Cinematic marmite' is a clichéd term and we hesitate to use it, but you're either going to love or hate Steve Oram's bold, berserk, dystopian dark comedy. There's absolutely no dialogue, as all the characters behave like apes, grunting, drinking, fighting and fornicating. *AAAAAAAAH!* will either alienate you from the start, making you more and more irritated as it goes on, or you'll be won over by the distinctive and absurd nature of Oram's vision. The film is centred on a makeshift family led by Julian Rhind-Tutt's obnoxious alpha, which falls apart when eligible female Lucy Honigman is seduced by Oram's confident intruder.



It veers between confrontational shock value (severed penises, a lot of pissing, Toyah Wilcox shitting on the floor) and totally absurd, even becoming oddly moving in places, as Julian Barratt's ousted alpha sadly caresses a Battenberg in his exile in the garden. Arguments could be made for massive self-indulgence, but the simple fact is that you've not really seen anything like this. We think you should give it a go.

Jonathan Hatfull

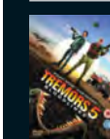
SciFiNow scored **7** for AAAAAAAAH!

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

TREMORS 5: BLOODLINES

Return of the Assblasters

Details 15 // 95 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray • DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Don Michael Paul **Cast** Michael Gross, Jamie Kennedy, Pearl Thusi **Distributor** Universal



There's always been something immensely lovable about the *Tremors* franchise. It never lost sight of its roots, it never lost sight of the fact that it was a comedy as much as it was a creature feature, and it never lost sight of the fact that Michael Gross' Burt Gummer was essential.

All of these things remain true for the latest sequel, which takes Burt and his new videographer (Jamie Kennedy) to South Africa, where ass blasters have been attacking wildlife preserve. As Burt points out, "if you've got Assblasters, you've got Graboids," and they soon realise that they're looking at a new stage in the creatures' evolution.

Despite the persistent use of (really pretty good) CGI, this definitely feels like a *Tremors* movie. It's fun, it's fast, it's funny, there's plenty of orange schlock thrown around, and Gross is on top form as the weapons-loving monster hunter. It clunks in places and the occasional attempts to veer into horror are generally fumbled, but if you're a *Tremors* fan looking for a fix, we're happy to say that this is for you. All hail Burt Gummer.

Jonathan Hatfull

SciFiNow scored **6** for Tremors 5: Bloodlines

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

TRIVIA THE HOUSE OWNED BY ROCK HUDSON'S CHARACTER IN *SECONDS* ACTUALLY BELONGED TO DIRECTOR JOHN FRANKENHEIMER IN REAL LIFE.

THE SKULL

Amicus's answer

SciFiNow Must see now!

Details 15 // 83 mins // 1965 // Blu-ray // **Released** Out now **Director** Freddie Francis
Cast Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Jill Bennett **Distributor** Eureka

Re-teaming the Hammer dream duo of Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee for a second time after *Dr Terror's House Of Horrors* from the same year, you get the sense that the two horror stalwarts are on autopilot by this point – although this doesn't make *The Skull* any less terrifying or terrific.

It helps that the pair are working with *Dr Terror* director Freddie Francis, *Psycho* author Robert Bloch and Amicus heads Milton Subotsky and Max Rosenberg. Although the acting is hammy as always, the script draws more on the Lovecraftian: after coming into possession of a human skull formerly owned by the Marquis de Sade that seems to attract dire consequences for whoever owns it, Dr Christopher Maitland (Cushing) proceeds to gradually lose his mind, all the while dogged by rival collector Sir Matthew Phillips (Lee).

The 'less is more' approach pays dividends; we're never given a full explanation of the skull's power, expected instead to be satisfied with the fact that it is just evil. And this is just fine, considering the nameless, wordless dread that it inspires. We don't know it's power; all we know is that it's utterly deadly, and Cushing's performance perfectly sells this to us. It's a role he has performed many a time, going from wry cynic to man out of his depth, but it still stands out as an example of why he was horror's go-to straight man.

The only real criticism is that the middle part is slightly dull. Bookended by an excellent opening and a chilling, Hitchcock-esque climax, things tend to plod by, especially when Cushing isn't there to make sure that everything's ticking along. It's all in the cause of ratcheting up the tension, sure, but the impatient horror hound in us is barking at the screen, waiting impatiently until the next big scare.

In fairness, however, *The Skull* definitely delivers in this regard. Amicus never quite managed to match up to Hammer, but on this evidence it certainly gave it a good go.

Steve Wright

8 SciFiNow scored **8** for The Skull
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Raven
Francis's 1963 adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's gothic classic captures the nameless dread perfectly.

POLTERGEIST

They're here...again

Details 15 // 93 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray • DVD // **Released** 26 October **Director** Gil Kenan
Cast Sam Rockwell, Rosemarie DeWitt, Jared Harris, Jane Adams **Distributor** 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment

Arguably the biggest thing working against Gil Kenan (*Monster House*) in his remake of the Tobe Hooper/Steven Spielberg haunter is that horror movies have been merrily ripping off *Poltergeist* for decades, so there are points during this polished and occasionally effective re-do where you feel like you're watching an *Insidious* movie.

This is perhaps unavoidable, but it is also unfortunate, as there are things to like here. The cast is very strong, led by Sam Rockwell (*Moon*) and Rosemarie DeWitt (*The Watch*) as the parents who move into a new house and promptly lose their young daughter to the spirit world, and the script by David Lindsay-Abaire (*Rise Of The Guardians*) takes the time to let us get to know the characters and sympathise with their situation. But after an effective first assault, Kenan loses his grip on the scares and we're left with Jared Harris's entertainingly hammy Oirish ghost hunter to keep things fun.

As remakes go this isn't bad enough to warrant full condemnation, but its fresh approach really only goes as far as updating the effects and technology. It's fine, but could have been a lot better.

Jonathan Hatfull

5 SciFiNow scored **5** for Poltergeist
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

Season Three

SciFiNow Must see now!

HANNIBAL Sweet meats

Details 18 // 536 mins // BD • DVD // Out now **Creator** Bryan Fuller **Cast** Mads Mikkelsen, Hugh Dancy, Laurence Fishburne, Caroline Dhavernas, Gillian Anderson **Distributor** Studio Canal

With the wound left by its cancellation/non-renewal still a little raw, what we can do is take a look back at *Hannibal* and think about how remarkable it is that a show this dark and daring managed three years on network television. It was so good that we fretted about it getting cancelled after each season.

If Bryan Fuller was worried about NBC pulling the plug, the third season didn't show it. The first half of the season was murky, gruesome, ponderous and often inaccessible, as Hugh Dancy's Will journeyed into Hannibal (the always brilliant Mads Mikkelsen)'s past and discovered just how dark his own heart had become.

Separating its leads kept the show fresh, and gave us the brilliant pairing of Lecter and Gillian Anderson's icy but increasingly terrified Dr Du Maurier as they ate their way through Florence's high society.

Will's self-reflection and Hannibal's dinner parties were matched with the triumphant return of the Vergers, with Joe Anderson making the disfigured, vengeful Mason his own after stepping in for the departed Michael Pitt. Caroline Dhavernas' Alana Bloom, having been short-changed in Season Two, became one of the show's most compelling characters, discovering a darkness that was tremendous fun to watch.

The eventual collision of the three storylines was absolutely glorious; a grotesque, hilarious and oddly moving grand guignol that we still can't believe they got away with.

At the halfway point the show launched into the *Red Dragon* storyline, with superb performances from Richard Armitage and Rutina Wesley as the Tooth Fairy and Reba McClane, the woman who might be able to save him. It's compelling stuff, and Fuller plays with the source material to tremendous effect, although the madness of the first half is occasionally missed.

However, fans can rest assured that the finale works as a fitting farewell to a show that was unarguably the most beautifully made series on television, with one of the most fascinating central relationships we've seen in years.

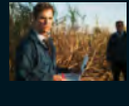
With brilliant performances, fantastic writing, stunning cinematography and distressingly mouth-watering cannibalism, this is superb television that we already miss and can't wait to revisit.

Jonathan Hatfull

9 SciFiNow scored **9** for Hannibal Season Three

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



True Detective
The first season of HBO's stunning crime show went deep into the heads of its antiheroes.

Series Two

SPACE: 1999 The final frontier goes even further

Details PG // 1,200 mins // BD // Out now **Creator** Gerry and Sylvia Anderson **Cast** Martin Landau, Barbara Bain, Catherine Schell **Distributor** Network

The crew of Moonbase Alpha continue their voyage across the universe, with Commander Koenig (Martin Landau) and Dr Helena Russell (Barbara Bain) remaining reassuring, resolute leads.

Several first series characters disappeared, while Catherine Schell joined the crew as Spock-ish new alien science officer Maya, who has the convenient ability to transform herself into any living thing just by thinking about it. In one disturbingly porny sequence she turns into Helena, prompting Koenig to work out which one's which by giving them both a snog.

Gerry Anderson was often first in line to ridicule year two's more preposterous excesses, including producer Fred Freiberger's demand for more monsters; hence the sudden glut of laugh-out-loud rubber suits, which made rather a mockery of the show's initial all-time-high production values. Gerry was also incredulous about Freiberger's decision to name a planet after a place name that he spotted on an English road sign, which he felt sounded mysterious and alluring. Hence *Space: 1999*'s all-time low-point, 'The Rules Of Luton'.

Grotesque rubber monsters aside, the modelwork and special effects still look amazing. There are imaginatively-realised planet surfaces and interiors.

It sounds great too, the subdued music of year one replaced with Derek Wadsworth's soundtrack of strident action-jazz, cosmic disco and eerie ambient. The most frustrating aspect of year two is not that it's bad, but that there's a potentially great show underneath, struggling to assert itself. So many episodes contain solid concepts, cracking performances, compelling visuals and intriguing dialogue on weighty themes, but too often these are squandered by hastily simplistic resolutions, clunking plot holes and scripts that run out of recycled *Star Trek* scenarios.

Although it is frequently ponderous, compromised, nonsensical, frothy, hackneyed and badly thought-out, there are multiple compensations and bags of entertainment value.

Chris Chantler

7 SciFiNow scored **7** for Space: 1999 Season Two

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

UFO
Anderson's first live-action series gave us another endearing Moonbase crew, and fewer rubber monsters.

TRIVIA NINA ARIANDA (MOLLY GRAHAM) PREVIOUSLY WORKED WITH HUGH DANCY IN *VENUS IN FUR* ON BROADWAY.

Season Two

THE 100 Grounders' day

Details 15 // 646 mins // DVD • Blu-ray // Out now **Creator** Jason Rothenberg
Cast Eliza Taylor, Bob Morley, Paige Turco, Marie Avgeropoulos, Henry Ian Cusick
Distributor Warner Home Video

After a mediocre first season, *The 100* has come back for Season Two with a vengeance. The remaining 48 wake up in what appears to be an underground bunker, and they don't quite know how they got there. But Clarke Griffin (Eliza Taylor) is sure as hell going to find out.

Throughout Season One, Clarke's transformation from healer to leader was easily one of the most intriguing aspects of the show. Thankfully, Season Two amps the transformation up to 11 as Clarke becomes a commander in the battle between the Grounders, the Sky People and the Mountain Men. But it's not only Clarke who's getting the character development treatment: Bellamy becomes more of a team player, Clarke's mother Abby (Paige Turco) and Chancellor Kane (Henry Ian Cusick) begin to realise how screwed up the Ark's legal system was, and Murphy (Richard Harmon), who played the role of Token Arse-wipe in Season One, has strangely become one of the show's most likeable characters. But still the teenagers remain infinitely more interesting than the adults. This is their journey, after all.

Romantic relationships blossom too, adding a sprinkling of humanity over the dilapidated and war-torn planet Earth. Raven (Lindsey Morgan) deals with losing Finn (Thomas McDonell), Jasper (Devon Bostick) gets a Mount Weather girlfriend, and Octavia (Marie Avgeropoulos) and Lincoln (Ricky Whittle) grow closer, as if that were even possible. The season also sews the seeds for a same-sex relationship involving a primary character, which has a lot of potential for Season Three.

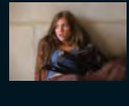
Each episode connects and flows into the next, and the season is as mad and fast-paced as a Grounder at a Reaper's dinner party. There's always at least four things happening at once – usually Clarke and Lexa's (Alycia Debnam-Carey) war antics, Jaha (Isaiah Washington) and Murphy's quest to the City of Light, Jasper holding the fort at Mount Weather and whatever the heck the Ark councillors get up to – but everything contributes to a rich and action-packed narrative.

After a conflict on as huge a scale as the one this season, it'll be interesting to see what the show will do to top it.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

SciFiNow scored **7** for The 100: Season Two
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Revolution
Humans fight to survive after the entire planet's electricity is wiped out, seemingly for good.

Season Two

AGENTS OF SHIELD

SciFiNow Must see now!

Quake on me

Details 15 // 933 mins // Blu-ray • DVD • iTunes // Out now **Creators** Joss Whedon, Jed Whedon, Maurissa Tancharoen **Cast** Clark Gregg, Ming-Na Wen, Chloe Bennet, Iain DeCaestecker, Elizabeth Henstridge **Distributor** Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment

It's not a matter of opinion that *Agents Of SHIELD* came in with shaky legs and not a clue during its first season. There's no other way of putting it: for a while, it was disappointing. But as soon as it began to entwine with the MCU and it was discovered that HYDRA had infiltrated the team, things kicked off in a big way and the show became a must-see. Fortunately, Season Two has continued to be as strong and engaging as the back end of the first.

The aftermath of HYDRA's rise and Ward (Brett Dalton)'s betrayal keeps the storyline running full steam ahead: Coulson (Clark Gregg) unravels his new-found tendency to carve alien symbols, May (Ming-Na Wen) becomes Skye (Chloe Bennet)'s new SO, Fitz (Iain DeCaestecker) deals with his brain damage and Simmons (Elizabeth Henstridge)' absence, who finds herself undercover at HYDRA's headquarters. Along with the unravelling story and awesome gadgets and fight sequences, the characters really make the show. It's difficult not to end up getting attached to at least a handful of them. The ensemble is unlikely to start raking in awards, but they succeed in bringing the diverse Marvel characters to life on screen and making you care about them.

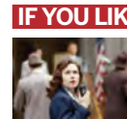
A few new players also join the team, including mercenary Lance Hunter (Nick Blood), mechanic Mack (Henry Simmons) and Bobbi 'Mockingbird' Morse (Adrianne Palicki), and frequent appearances from genre favourites – the best being Hayley Atwell as Peggy Carter, Kyle MacLachlan as Calvin Zabo and Lucy Lawless as Isabelle Hartley – keep fans' geek-senses tingling. They all seem to have an ulterior motive; anyone could be working for HYDRA.

Occasionally, Season Two hits a bum note where the storyline either drags or goes off on a tangent. The third quarter of the season takes a little while to find its footing again after the mid-season break. But when it's good, it's very good. Opener 'Shadows', Simmons-centric 'Making Friends And Influencing People' and mid-season finale 'What They Become' are particularly tasty.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

SciFiNow scored **8** for Agents Of SHIELD: Season Two
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Agent Carter
Peggy Carter takes on New York, uncovering secrets, kicking asses and showing the SSR who's boss.

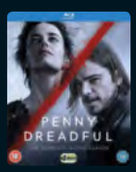
TRIVIA KYLE MACLACHLAN AND DICHEN LACHMAN, WHO PLAY SKYE'S PARENTS IN THE SERIES, BOTH HAVE THEIR BIRTHDAYS ON 22 FEBRUARY.

Season Two

SciFiNow Must see now!

PENNY DREADFUL Witch-hunted

Details 18 // 600 mins // Blu-ray • DVD // 26 October **Creator** John Logan
Cast Eva Green, Josh Hartnett, Timothy Dalton, Helen McCrory, Rory Kinnear, Billie Piper
Distributor Paramount Home Entertainment



The first season of the Victorian-era monster mash was beautifully made, but inconsistent. There were some great ideas and strong performances, but no clear direction. This has been solved in Season Two, resulting in a leaner, sharper and entertaining show, elevating *Penny Dreadful* from 'promising' to 'must-see' status.

Vanessa Ives (Eva Green) is on a mission to find out what Lucifer wants from her, while Sir Malcolm (Timothy Dalton) grieves for his lost daughter. Ethan Chandler (Josh Hartnett) pledges to guard Vanessa while concealing his lycanthropic secret, and Dr Frankenstein (Harry Treadaway) and his creature John Clare (Rory Kinnear) begin the process of convincing the reanimated Brona (Billie Piper) that she is Lily, betrothed to Mr Clare. Into their already troubled lives returns Madame Kali (Helen McCrory), who is not just a tarot-card reader, but the head of a coven who are just dying to get their hands on Vanessa.

Having a main villain who is a significant presence helps no end. It's still a show that feels comfortable meandering through its gorgeous sets and leaving its characters to meditate on their inner demons, but there's a drive that makes it infinitely more fun. It also helps that Madame Kali is played by McCrory, whose ferocious and witty performance works beautifully opposite Green's.

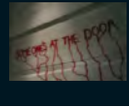
Green, meanwhile, may still be the crown jewel of its cast, but Rory Kinnear's brilliant turn as Mr Clare is one of the season's highlights, as is the guest appearance from Patti LuPone as a witch who taught Vanessa how to use her abilities.

Some of the problems still remain, but this is a marked improvement. The pace is quicker, the characters more developed (even Dorian Gray gets more interesting), and the horrors more horrifying. One or two self-indulgent wobbles aside, it builds to a marvellous crescendo, and we're very excited to see what fresh hell Logan puts his characters through in Season Three.

Jonathan Hatfull

8 SciFiNow scored **8** for Penny Dreadful Season Two
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



American Gothic
The Devil is Gary Cole's small-town sheriff in this cult classic series.

Season One

SciFiNow Must see now!

THE LEFTOVERS The end is now

Details 18 // 558 mins // Blu-ray • DVD // Out now **Creators** Damon Lindelof, Tom Perrotta
Cast Justin Theroux, Amy Brenneman, Christopher Eccleston, Liv Tyler **Distributor** Warner Home Video

When describing its appeal, *The Leftovers* is a tricky sell. Taking place in a world where 140 million people (around two per cent of the world's population) have suddenly disappeared, it follows the progress of the town of Mapleton as its inhabitants struggle to come to terms with the new world order.

Everyone has different coping methods: chief of police Kevin Garvey (Justin Theroux) buries himself in his work, alienating his wayward daughter Jill (Margaret Qualley); his wife Laurie (Amy Brenneman) abandons her family to join one of the cults that have sprung up after the supposed rapture, the silent, chain-smoking Guilty Remnant; their son Tommy (Chris Zylka) has also absconded, taking refuge with the charismatic yet sinister 'Holy Wayne' (Paterson Joseph), and reverend Matt Jamison (Christopher Eccleston) channels his own despair into outing supposed sinners among the departees.

This is TV at its most bleak. Every character has their own personal demon that they seek to escape from, although for the most part they only succeed in taking two steps backward for every forward stride. This kind of mediation on grief is rare on TV nowadays, at least that which isn't punctuated by comic relief. A major factor of dealing with trauma is coming to terms with the fact that some things can't be recovered from. The creators seem to understand this, and it's a much more startlingly effective show as a consequence.

It's the moments of introspection that linger the most: Kevin screaming underwater in his family swimming pool; a single tear running down Jill's eye as she 'assists' a male friend; Matt bathing his paralysed wife Mary (Janel Moloney). All of this takes place in a US where traffic is sparse, children are rarely seen, and the Guilty Remnant linger on every corner. It's a world that's startlingly familiar, and is all the more eerie and bleak for it.

By turns harrowing yet unremittingly atmospheric, at times *The Leftovers* is an ordeal to get through. It's one you owe to yourself to experience though.

Steve Wright

9 SciFiNow scored **9** for The Leftovers Season One
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Sense8
Another show in which people try to make sense of strange occurrences. It's a lot less depressing, mind.

TRIVIA JOHN LOGAN TOLD HELEN MCCRORY THE TRUTH ABOUT HER CHARACTER WHEN HE APPROACHED HER TO CAMEO IN SEASON ONE.

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b) Leila

c) Lucy

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DARK MATTER

New universe, same space

Details 15 // 585 mins // DVD • Blu-ray // Out now **Creators** Joseph Mallozzi, Paul Mullie
Cast Anthony Lemke, Marc Bendavid, Melissa O'Neil, Alex Mallari Jr, Jodelle Ferland
Distributor Acorn

Superficially, Dark Matter sounds a lot like *Stargate Universe*, the last space-based series that creators Joseph Mallozzi and Paul Mullie worked on together. The main characters are a mismatched bunch who find themselves stuck on a spaceship that's falling apart with little food and water. There is even a synchronicity between *SGU*'s ending – when Destiny's crew goes into stasis – and *Dark Matter*'s opening scenes, where we meet the characters as they come out of it.

Beyond its basic premise, though, *Dark Matter* feels more like *Firefly* with elements of other space operas mixed in. The 'crew' are an argumentative bunch of renegade misfits who find themselves working together out of convenience rather than duty. Moreover, among them is a borderline-psychic teenage girl who might be more dangerous than the dodgy group she's hitched a ride with. For it, Jodelle Ferland deserves to emulate Summer Glau's rise to cult heroine status.

Other characters also feel familiar, such as the ship's resident android (*Lost Girl*'s Zoie Palmer), the Han Soloesque hothead (excellently portrayed by Anthony Lemke) and a modern samurai (Alex Mallari Jr), who has an impressive range of Japanese sword fighting skills, but only one facial expression. The early episodes tend to re-tread past ground, too. In one of these the crew finds an android (Ruby Rose) that is programmed to provide various forms of pleasure. Predictably, however, sex gives way to slamming into bulkheads when its true purpose is revealed.

Dark Matter succeeds despite its derivative elements, however, because as the season progresses interesting back stories build on questions about nature, nurture and choice. Witty dialogue provides the levity that *SGU* lacked and ensures that *Dark Matter* takes place in a very different universe from Mallozzi and Mullie's last stellar show.

Michael Simpson

SciFiNow scored **7** for Dark Matter Season One

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...

Stargate Universe
Gritty and realistic, this deserves better than to go down as the show that killed the franchise.

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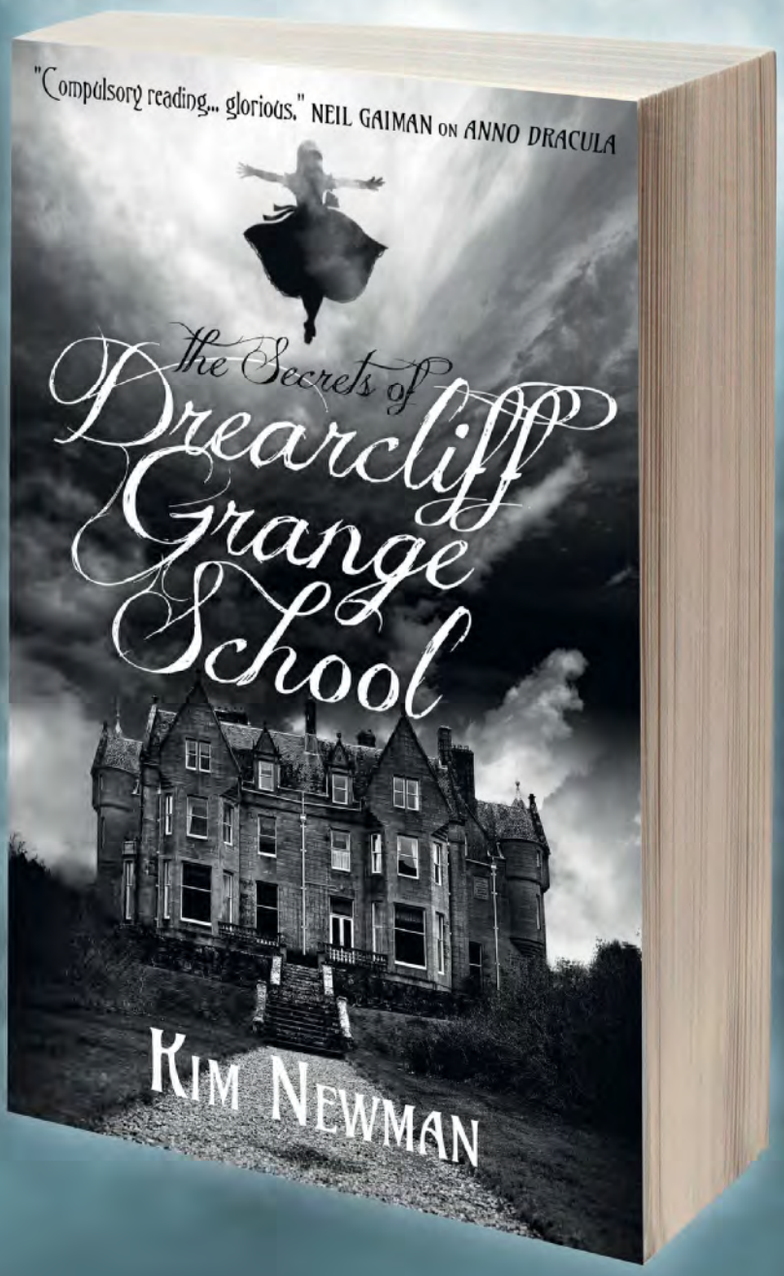
A week after her mother found her sleeping on the ceiling, Amy Thomsett is delivered to her new school...



PRAISE FOR KIM NEWMAN

"Utterly Wonderful"
- M.R. Carey

"Master Storytelling"
- Lauren Beukes

"Glorious"
- Neil Gaiman

Out this October in paperback

TITANBOOKS.COM

GAME INFO

Released
Out now
Certificate
18
Formats
PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PC
Publisher
Konami
Developer
Kojima Productions
Players
1 (1-2 online)
Downloadable
Yes

METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

SciFiNow Must see now!

A farewell to arms

It's funny that, after developing such a reputation for melodrama over a long career, Hideo Kojima's purported departure from Konami seems to have come around fairly quietly. It'll be a shame to see him leave, as there's no one else in the industry that could put such a stamp on a franchise, but if he is legitimately throwing in the towel this time, then he's done so in a way that proves just how at sea Konami will be without its most interesting asset.

That's because this is a startling videogame, frankly. Everything from its most overt third-person shooter features to its stealth intricacies are remarkably well thought-out and remarkably well implemented, with that typical, unique *Metal Gear* sense of humour ticking away in the background, this time in the form of preposterous cardboard box functions and the ability to Fulton-extract everything from shipping containers to bewildered birds of prey. However, for the most part the eccentricities have been pared back in favour of a more focused, more adult experience than the franchise is used to.

Initially, you may find this quite jarring if you're a long-term *Metal Gear* fan. *The Phantom Pain* tackles themes like child soldiers head on where other *Metal Gear* games in the past have merely relied on them as back story, and the violence feels significantly more visceral this time. *Metal Gear Solid* has such an established tone, yet changing up the formula for *The Phantom Pain* has made it feel fresh and interesting again without disrupting the serious/fun balance *too* much. Sometimes, it even feels like a different game altogether.

Many other things have changed, though. For one, this is undeniably one of the best-looking games on the console, even with such a demanding (mostly) open world to explore. Secondly, the enemy AI has been developed to insane levels, with the many mercenaries patrolling the game's vast playgrounds reacting intelligently to every suspicious noise and errant tranquiliser dart. It's so sophisticated that the world reacts directly to your actions – if you shoot your enemies in the head with your tranquiliser, eventually they'll all start wearing helmets.

Missions are structured in a similar way to *Peace Walker* on the PSP in that you pick and choose an assignment from a list of main missions and side ops, choose a loadout, choose a time of arrival and then fly off in a chopper to tackle your objective. Once you're on the ground, the game opens up in ways that its predecessors never did. The amount of freedom you're given to tackle missions is remarkable, although the difficulty is such that going in loud rather than sticking to the shadows is rarely a viable option. Missions that advance the typically labyrinthine plot are great, but it sometimes feels like there are a few too many 'drop in, extract bloke, bug out' missions – some of these could have been trimmed back.

Perhaps most importantly, being that this is a stealth game, it's important to mention that the stealth mechanics in *The Phantom Pain* are best in class. As we've mentioned, enemies react in really intelligent ways – which is the first piece of the puzzle – and the way Snake handles feels weighty and intuitive, especially when popping into cover automatically and utilising the awesome cover dive that was implemented in prequel chapter *Ground Zeroes*.

Add to all this the inclusion of robust base-building features, about a million side missions, a cool buddy system in which you can tackle missions with NPC friends in tow and much more, and you're left with the most accomplished, most ambitious game of 2015.

Steve Holmes

9

SciFiNow scored **9** for Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker
Pick up the HD collection on the PSP.

NEED TO KNOW...

This sounds baffling. Do I need to play any of the other games?
Yes, it is, and yes, we'd recommend at least playing *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater* and *Peace Walker* if you get the chance. They're both excellent, and will help you make sense of the story.

Why have I seen videos of people attaching weather balloons to goats? I thought this was a serious game.
You're referring to the Fulton Extraction System. If you Fulton a goat in *MGSV*, or any other wildlife for that matter, you'll earn money to spend on development.

Why is the main character called Big Boss? That's a stupid name.
It's a codename, silly. Play *Snake Eater* and you'll see why.

How long is the game? The old ones only took me about 12 hours.
The Phantom Pain is preposterously long. You'd better book a couple of weeks off work.

TRIVIA WHEN INITIALLY REVEALING *MGSV*, HIDEO KOJIMA DID SO BEHIND A FRONT; A FAKE DEVELOPER CALLED MOBY DICK STUDIOS. THE TRAILER ENDED WITH THE LINE, "V HAS COME TO".

CERES

TACTICAL SPACE COMBAT

AVAILABLE OCTOBER 2015

12 www.pegi.info

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STEAMWORKS

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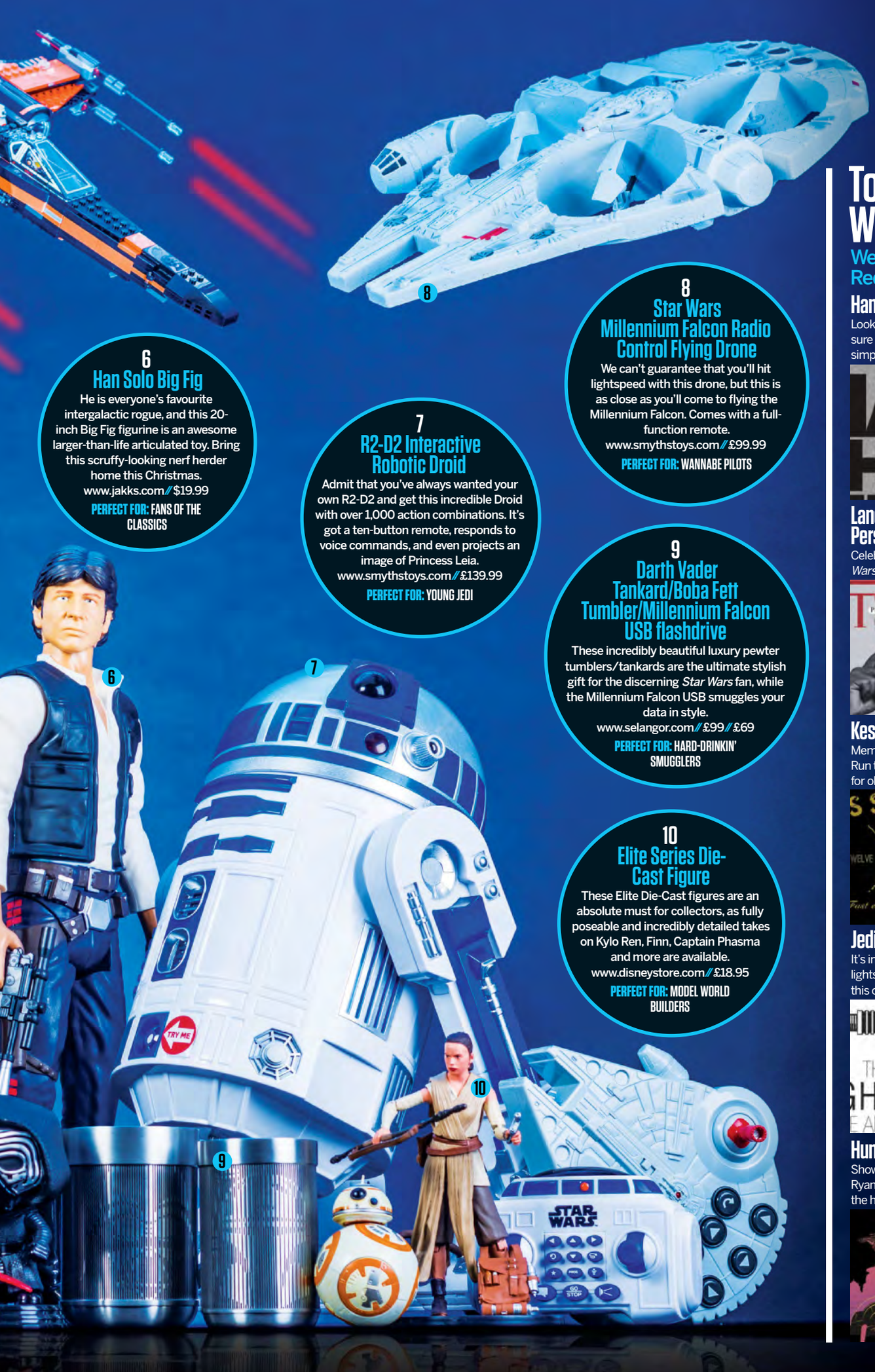
PERFECT FOR: REBEL PILOTS



6 Han Solo Big Fig

He is everyone's favourite intergalactic rogue, and this 20-inch Big Fig figurine is an awesome larger-than-life articulated toy. Bring this scruffy-looking nerf herder home this Christmas.
www.jakks.com // $19.99
PERFECT FOR: FANS OF THE CLASSICS

7 R2-D2 Interactive Robotic Droid

Admit that you've always wanted your own R2-D2 and get this incredible Droid with over 1,000 action combinations. It's got a ten-button remote, responds to voice commands, and even projects an image of Princess Leia.
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PERFECT FOR: YOUNG JEDI

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We can't guarantee that you'll hit lightspeed with this drone, but this is as close as you'll come to flying the Millennium Falcon. Comes with a full-function remote.
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PERFECT FOR: WANNABE PILOTS

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These incredibly beautiful luxury pewter tumblers/tankards are the ultimate stylish gift for the discerning *Star Wars* fan, while the Millennium Falcon USB smuggles your data in style.
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PERFECT FOR: HARD-DRINKIN' SMUGGLERS

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These Elite Die-Cast figures are an absolute must for collectors, as fully poseable and incredibly detailed takes on Kylo Ren, Finn, Captain Phasma and more are available.
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Top Star Wars tees

We raid the best of Red Bubble

Han Shot First

Look, we all know he did, but make sure the world knows it with this simple and effective tee. **£17.51**

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Celebrate the coolest guy in the *Star Wars* universe. **£15.04**

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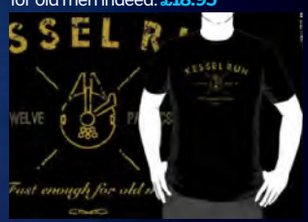
Memorialise Han and Chewie's Kessel Run time (12 parsecs!). Fast enough for old men indeed. **£18.95**



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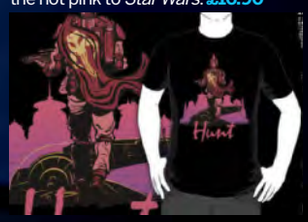
It's important to be proud of your lightsaber, so let the people know that this one is yours. **£14.85**

Hunt

Show off Boba Fett doing his best Ryan Gosling in this tee, which brings the hot pink to *Star Wars*. **£16.90**



A TOUCH OF EVIL

Publisher: Flying Frog Productions
// Players: 2-8 // RRP: £39.99

A Touch Of Evil is another classic game that has been reprinted for a new generation of gamers to enjoy.

The first thing that hits you about it is the production values. Flying Frog Productions is well known for its lavish games, and *A Touch Of Evil* is no exception, as everything about it screams quality. The eight player characters are well modelled, and come with equally impressive character cards. The various cards used throughout the game feature sumptuous art, and are incredibly sturdy, while the (admittedly tiny) board is beautifully illustrated. It even includes a CD of music to play so the correct tone can be set while playing. Best of all, however, are the hilariously campy costumes that have been used, which give the art a truly schlocky feel. In short, the presentation is superb.

Set in the early 19th Century, the aim of *A Touch Of Evil* is to ward off the attacks of one of four villainous monsters that are plaguing the town of Shadowbrook. What sets *A Touch Of Evil* apart from several similar games is that

1 BOARD
The stunningly illustrated board highlights everything you can do during play.

2 CHARACTERS
Like previous Flying Frog games, the models are of a very high standard.

3 SPECIAL CARDS
Mystery cards represent evil actions and influences of the villain, while Event cards grant bonuses to players.

4 BONUS CARDS
Secrets are played face down next to Town Elders, Lair cards show where the villain is hidden, and Town Items can be purchased from the village Blacksmith.

5 CD
Set the mood with this atmospheric soundtrack.

6 TOWN ELDERS
The town elders are the pillars of Shadowbrook, and may help or hinder you. Choose them wisely.

7 TOKENS
Tokens represent Wounds, Investigations, Militia and Skill Upgrades.

8 THE SHADOW TRACK
Used to mark the progress and strength of the villain.

it can be played both competitively or co-operatively, with the game's difficulty suitably ramping up if the latter option is chosen.

Each round, turns are split into three steps: you can move, fight any enemies in your space or take a specific action that can range from healing wounds to buying lair cards or investigating the possible secrets of the town elders. The town elders are important, as they can be taken along for the final showdown, but there's a catch: sometimes they might be allies of the villain, or even the villain themselves. It's a great mechanic, and cleverly handled, as a ticking timer means that you can't investigate the elders as much as you'd like. The ticking timer is used in the cooperative game, with the villain slowly gaining in power as the timer ticks down.

A Touch Of Evil is heavily thematic and full of clever ideas and excellent production values, but it's worth noting that it's heavily reliant on dice rolls that govern everything from movement to overall combat. Some players love the randomness that this offers, but others like to be a bit more in control of their actions, so it's worth keeping in mind depending on the players that visit your table.

BEST FOR: HORROR FANS

TOP FIVE MAGIC: THE GATHERING ORIGINS

1. JACE, VRYN'S PRODIGY £40

2. LILIANA, HERETICAL HEALER £40

3. NISSA, VASTWOOD SEER £30

4. HANGARBACK WALKER £20

5. ARCHANGEL OF TITHES £10

Munchkin Adventure Time

Publisher: Steve Jackson Games // **Players:** 3-6 // **RRP:** £19.99

Steve Jackson's *Munchkin* has proven itself to be an excellent card-based adventure game, and this latest standalone expansion is no different. Based on the popular cartoon series *Adventure Time*, the aim of the game is to simply choose a character and reach level ten before everyone else. Levels are typically gained by defeating monsters, but it's also possible to gain them from specific cards or by selling items.

There are two types of cards in *Munchkin Adventure Time*: Door Cards and Treasure Cards. Door Cards are turned over by each player at the start of their turn, and can have all sorts of outcomes, from fighting monsters to offering bonuses or even cursing the player. If no monster is available, players have the option to go looking for trouble (fight a monster from their hand of cards) or loot the room (take an additional Door Card). Players must also ensure they never have more than five cards in hand at the end of their turn, so must give additional cards to the player with the lowest level.

Munchkin Adventure Time might be simple, but it plays quickly, and is brilliantly themed for those that love the popular cartoon. It's the perfect entry game for younger players, and comes highly recommended.

BEST FOR: YOUNGER GAMERS

Dark Moon

Publisher: Stronghold Games // **Players:** 3-7 // **RRP:** £49.99

Dark Moon's history is interesting, as it started off as an unofficial version of *Battlestar Galactica* called *BSG Express*. The key difference is that it uses dice instead of cards to resolve resolutions, which greatly speeds up the gameplay.

Despite the new setting, the gameplay is very similar to *BSG*, with players being split into two teams: infected and non-infected. The trick here is that no one knows who is who; every action becomes a calculated risk as you try and work out which players can be trusted. The non-infected are simply trying to survive until help arrives and achieve specific objectives, while the infected are aiming to kill everyone in the abandoned mining facility.

Many objectives need to be solved by hitting a certain amount of points with your dice rolls. A lot of the die have negative numbers assigned to them though, which means you might look like you're purposely trying to sabotage an objective, which leads to all sorts of intrigue and double crossing.

Although its components are poor quality, Dark Moon's gameplay is exceedingly solid and effortlessly recreates the paranoia of numerous sci-fi classics. Just make sure you all get on afterwards.

BEST FOR: BETRAYAL GENRE FANS

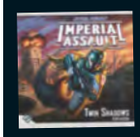
Expansion Of The Month

IMPERIAL ASSAULT: TWIN SHADOWS EXPANSION

Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games // **Players:** 2-5 // **RRP:** £32.99

He features proudly on the cover, but you'll need an extra £8 if you don't want to use the cardboard token of Boba Fett that is included in this first major *Imperial Assault* expansion.

Twin Shadows' plot sees the players searching for Han Solo and C-3PO and R2-D2 on Tatooine, and features encounters with the infamous bounty hunter, as well as skirmishes with Tusken raiders and Imperials. Two new heroes are introduced: engineer Saska Teft and a guerrilla called Biv Bodhrik, and there are also 65 new cards to enhance the base game. As before, it's designed for both the campaign and skirmish games, making it solid value for money.



Do You Remember?

INDIANA JONES FROM RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

Daring adventure, if you can stay awake

Although *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* boasted plenty of great memorabilia, this old board game isn't among them. While the board itself looked fantastic, it's a board game from a simpler time, meaning the gameplay mechanics are incredibly weak. Players take it in turn to spin a spinner and move around the board, doing whatever their tile tells them to. Once they've collected four cards of the same colour, they complete the game. It's simple, basic and offers no strategy, but it did capture the tones of the original film, even if the Indiana Jones on the box featured a moustache that would make Tom Selleck proud.

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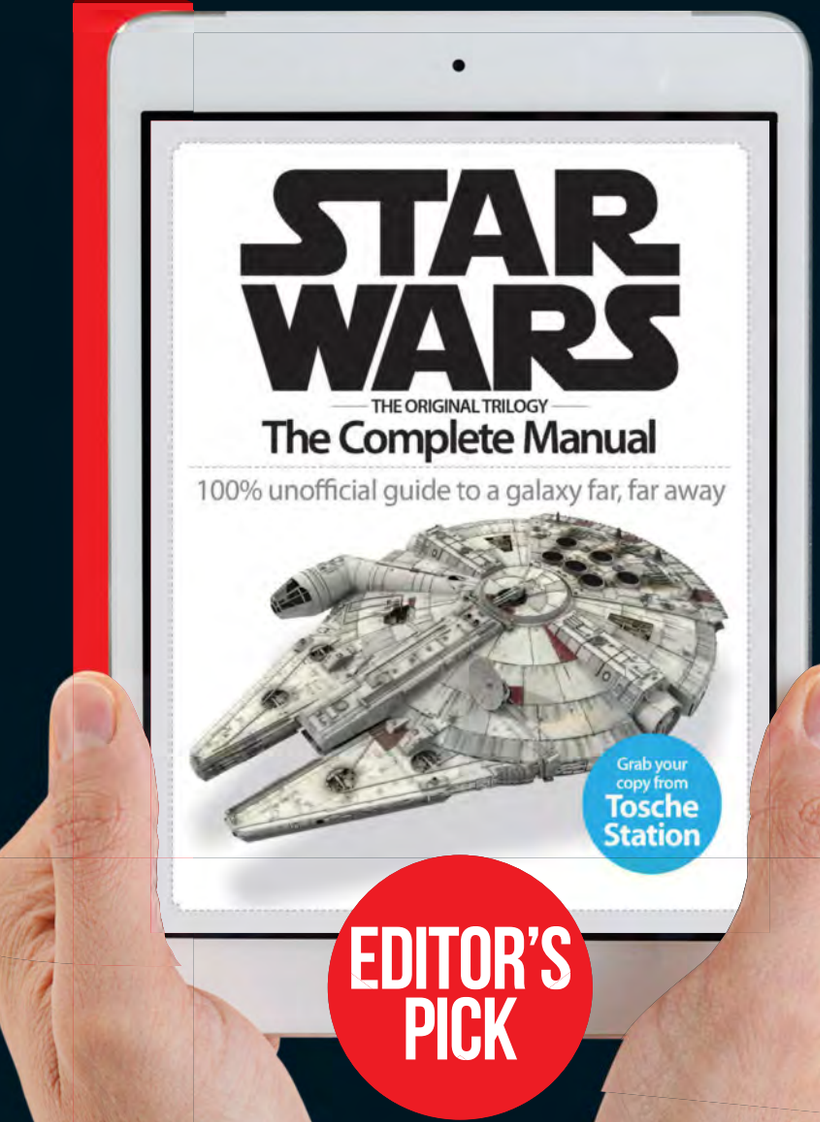

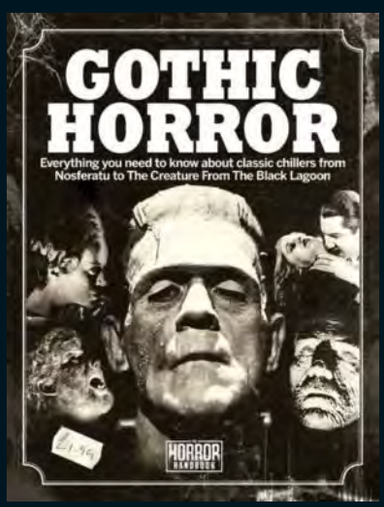

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5 APPS YOU MUST DOWNLOAD RIGHT NOW

Our pick of the best this month

DICE MAGE

FOR: IOS
PRICE: FREE

D&D lovers will find themselves hooked on this fun new RPG. Trade in 20-sided dice for exploding ones and cast spells on the bus, in the loo or even under your work desk. Play as a tiny mage and explore new worlds, discover treasures, come up against foes like demons, ogres and ghosties, and cast spells until the bitter end. Fast-paced role play, varying difficulty levels and a selection of magical overworlds to explore will make *Dice Mage* one that's hard to put down.

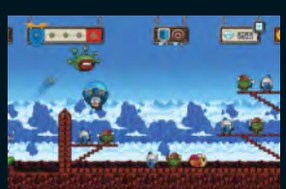
BEST FOR: DICE ADDICTS

TINY EMPIRE

FOR: IOS/ANDROID
PRICE: £2.29/$2.99

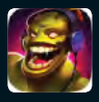
Have you ever dreamt of being a part of a magical, medieval empire, of fighting orcs and following an army into battle? Well, now you can! Under the rule of your king, conquer lands, unlock challenges and stay on your toes. This story-driven puzzle shooter requires skill and strategy. With a range of difficulty levels as wide as this, mastering the adventure can be pretty tricky and adds a whole lot to the game's replay value. It's charming, fun and a must-have.

BEST FOR: WANNABE RULERS



BEAT DA BEAT

FOR: IOS/ANDROID
PRICE: £0.79/$0.99



Do you feel rhythm in your fingers? Do you feel it in your toes? Then this new sci-fi-inspired rhythm-cum-action shoot 'em up-style game is perfect for you. Get your hands a-tapping along to a selection of catchy tracks while fighting off bosses, shooting alien enemies and dodging bullets. It's almost too much to handle. Four difficulty levels mean you'll always be trying to better yourself. The style, music and dancing characters make *Beat Da Beat* something special.

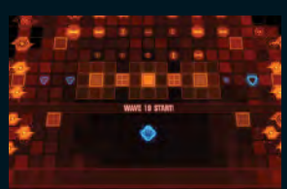
BEST FOR: RHYTHM SLAVES

DEVASTATOR

FOR: IOS/ANDROID
PRICE: £1.49/$1.99

This brand new arcade twin-stick shooter will get you begging it to slow the heck down. Featuring a super sleek and futuristic sci-fi design and smooth touch screen controls, *Devastator* lives up to its name. The aim is to blast your way through layered and customised levels while obliterating devious enemy types. Don't go into it with a big head: you're going to have to fine-tune your reflexes if you want to stand a chance at beating it. It's intense and it's relentless.

BEST FOR: SUPER SHOOTERS

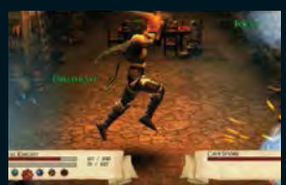


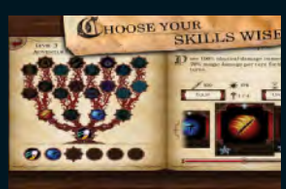
SKILLTREE SAGA

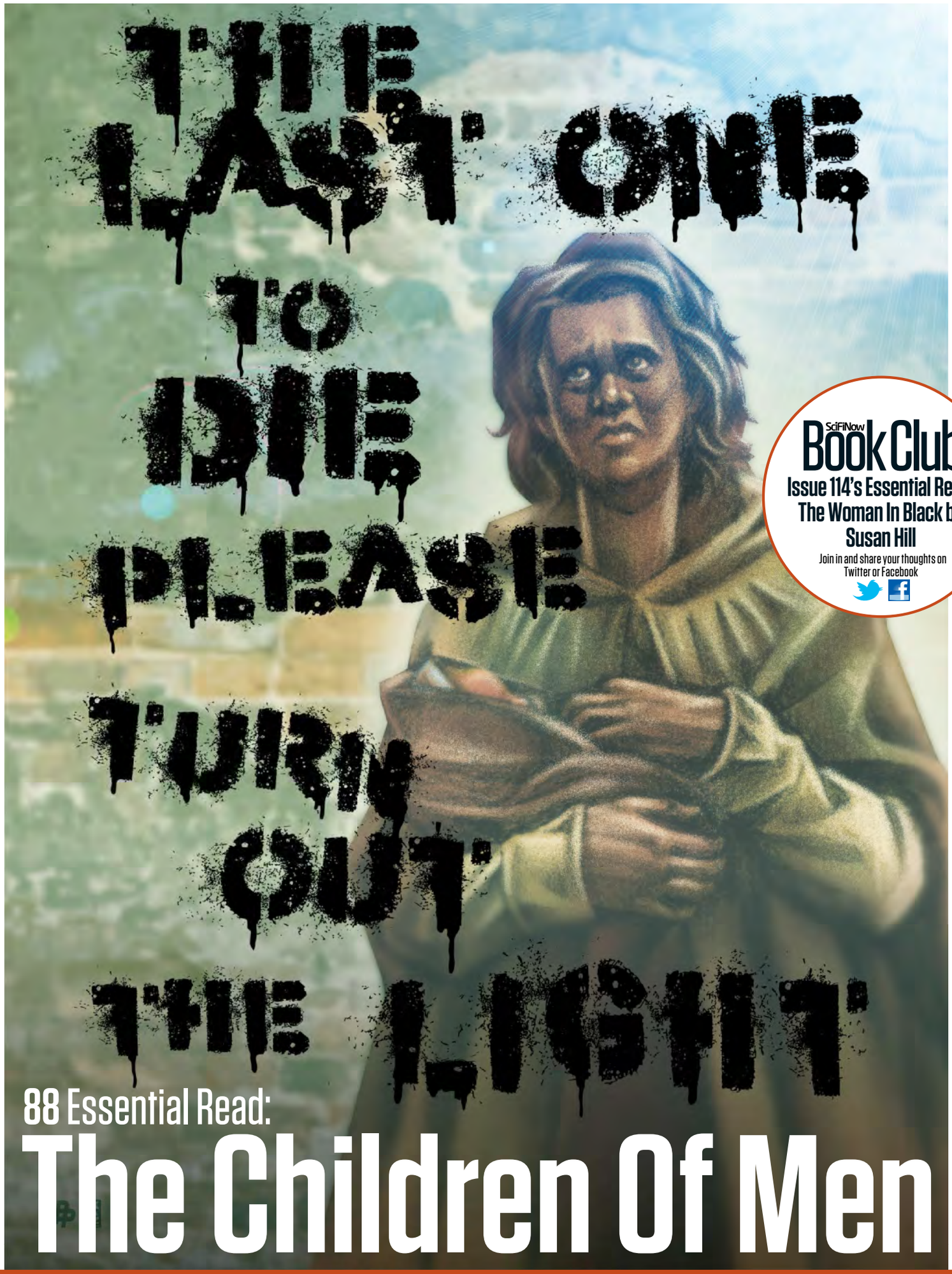
FOR: IOS/ANDROID
PRICE: £2.29/$2.99

The Dark Ruler Sargul has send his most egregious minions, a spawn of orcs and goblins, to besiege the city of Griffonford, Aventurien, and it's up to you to stop them. But that's not all of your worries right now: your beloved, the daughter of Baron Griffontrue, has been abducted. It's also up to you to get her back. Everything has gone tits up in Aventurien. This casual RPG with rogue-like elements is a fun venture into a bizarre fantasy world of magic and mayhem.

BEST FOR: ADVENTURE JUNKIES







SciFiNow Book Club

Issue 114's Essential Read: The Woman In Black by Susan Hill

Join in and share your thoughts on Twitter or Facebook

88 Essential Read:

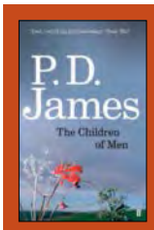
The Children Of Men

©Poster Posse/ Kaz Oomori

92 Beginner's Guide: Brandon Sanderson 94 Book Reviews 100 ET And The Green Planet 102 Graphic Novel Reviews 104 Charlie Adlard

Essential read:
The Children Of Men

PD James said her novel was not science fiction. Alfonso Cuarón said his adaptation wasn't science fiction. So why the hell do both versions look exactly like science fiction? Oh, the shame of it all... WORDS **MATTHEW HANDRAHAN**



SYNOPSIS

The new world began in 1995, Year Omega, when the last babies were born. There were no signs of the looming catastrophe. Our race's ability to breed was gone in a year, along with the male sperm count.

Anybody who believed that humankind could maintain its composure would quickly be proved wrong. By 2021, society had become almost unrecognisable, a dictatorship allowed to thrive in return for the security, comfort and pleasure of its citizens. Old people with no families are gently persuaded to take their own lives and alleviate the burden they place on younger generations. It is a selfish world, but when the future holds no prospect of survival nothing else makes sense.

As brother to the self-appointed Warden of England, Dr Theodore Faron enjoys a more enviable life than all but the youngest remaining humans. But an encounter with a dissident group, the Five Fishes, opens Theo's eyes to the corruption all around him, and to the final hope for humanity's survival.

Excitement surrounding Alfonso Cuarón's *Children Of Men* was muted. Audiences may have already have encountered *Y Tu Mamá También*, his artful fusion of bittersweet drama and sex comedy. More will have seen *Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban*, the third in the series, and by most people's estimation the best. But even those who saw both films would be forgiven looking past the name of their Mexican director. At that point in time, Cuarón was bubbling under. The release of *Children Of Men* pushed him over the top.

Adaptations can be a fine method of discovering new authors, mainly because the movies are seldom better than the source material. Detail and texture are always sacrificed when a novel is translated for cinema, and few directors can muster the visual inspiration to account for their loss. It takes a Ridley Scott, a Stanley Kubrick, a Steven Spielberg, a Robert Zemeckis – or, as it turned out, an Alfonso Cuarón. *Children Of Men* must have sent armies of enthralled viewers to their local Waterstones in a frenzied search for the PD James novel that inspired his incendiary film. How disappointed they must have been.

Not because the novel is bad, but because beyond the story's central premise, the two works have almost nothing in common. Cuarón became fixated on the material based on little more than a second-hand description, and his ideas calcified so quickly that actually reading the entire book seemed more like a risk than a necessity. An abridged version completed by the project's screenwriter, Tim Sexton, only reinforced Cuarón's conviction.

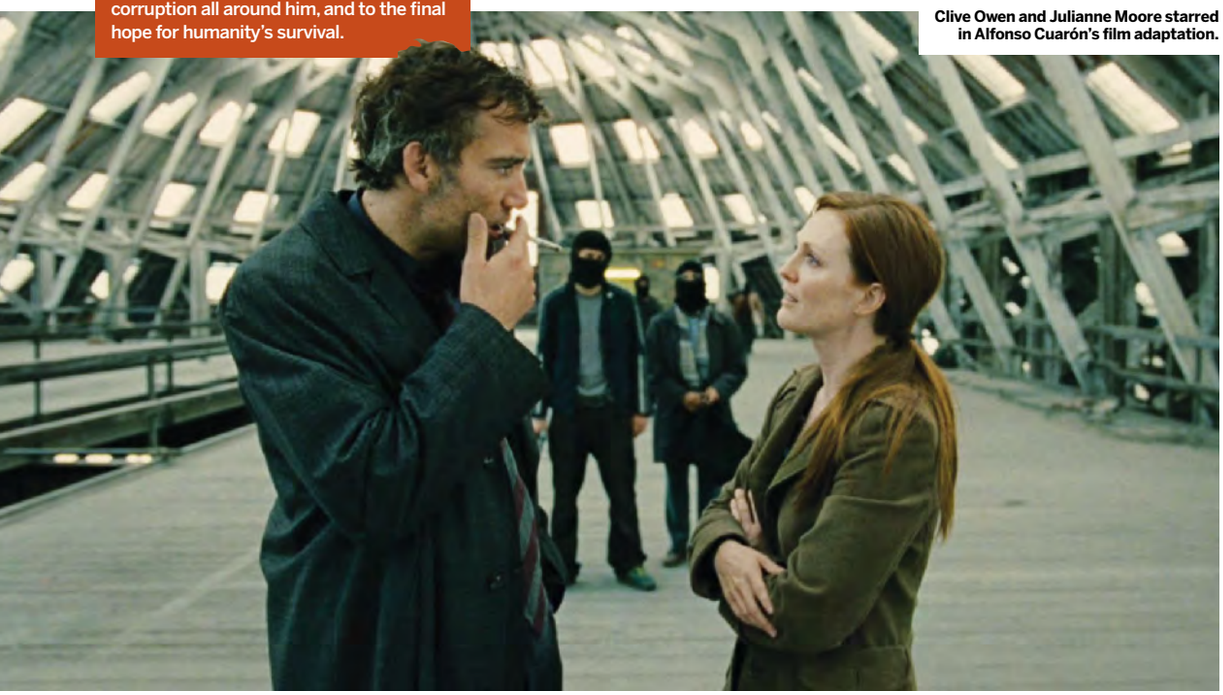
"*Children Of Men* is not *Harry Potter*. We aren't messing with a sacred tome," Sexton later said in an interview with US radio station KRCC. "We re-explored it. We took the premise and went in a different direction."

Cuarón's vision was gritty, violent, paranoid and, crucially, not sci-fi. In several interviews, Cuarón highlighted the novel's genre as one of his principal reasons for ignoring so much of its content. In his eyes, PD James had written a sci-fi novel, and thus the kind of story he had no interest in telling. This dismissive attitude is somewhat baffling, but it's easy to see why he presumed *The Children Of Men* to be sci-fi. Any explanation of its plot would point in exactly that direction, and then there's the author: James, one of the most famous living authors, and a loud-and-proud advocate of another enormously popular genre: the crime novel in general, and the detective novel in particular.

"It's sometimes easy to see why genre writing is despised, because you look at the number of books that you feel probably would not have seen the light of day if they hadn't been mystery, or science fiction," she said to *Salon*. "Everything is sacrificed to produce a puzzle, or excitement. Setting is perfunctory and, above all, characterisation has no subtlety, no ambiguity. All that is wanted is a thrill. But that, of course, is bad genre writing. Genre writing at its best is some of the best fiction we have."

And in a long and storied lifetime – she died last year, at the age of 94 – James wrote some of the best crime novels. Her books were a stiff retort to any high-falutin' critic who would dismiss all detective novels as pulp; full of elegant, lucid prose, multi-faceted characters and every conceivable shade of grey. These literary flourishes allowed her books to stand apart from the more mechanical examples of the crime genre.

"I like structured fiction, with a beginning, a middle and an end. I like a novel to have narrative drive, pace, resolution," she said to *The Paris*

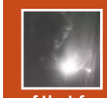


Clive Owen and Julianne Moore starred in Alfonso Cuarón's film adaptation.

“IT ISN’T A VERY DIFFERENT WORLD TO THE ONE WE KNOW”
PD JAMES
© Rex

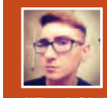
Your Take On The Classic

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW


"Y'know how some people don't want to watch the film coz the book is so good? Children of Men is the reverse of that for me" **@neil_bomb**

"The film didn't do the book justice" @chefyego

"I read it a good few years ago now and I've not forgotten - and will never, *ever* forget - the Quietus scene. Deeply chilling." **@LouMorgan**


"A harrowing tale, creeping ever closer to a harsh look at mankind's future instead of a work of fiction. Amazing book. #BookClub" @Evazorek

"Read it, preferred the film. Found the book a little facile but with an overwhelming sadness missing from the movie. Will re-read." **@DCLascelle**

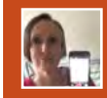
"Terrific book, suspense, action but still very thoughtful. Well written & a must for any fan dystopian literature." **@SharkOfLago**

"Saw the film 1st which is good but book is better, More background and political underpinning of the plot and denouement" **@rmltpie**

"I thought it was very good " **@jennycolgan**

"Read it in an afternoon. Loved it! **@HarleyQuinn_Lon**

"Some keen insight into social breakdown (beyond the storyline)" **@Mr__Gus**


"I adored PD James, but Children of Men is a rare (only?) time I felt the movie was better than the (very good) book." **@Enstone**

"Just #read Children of Men by PD James. Different from movie. Are we so driven by the future that no children = no hope? Much to consider." **@katkat_alcala**

"PD James~Elevated murder-mystery genre to high literature & wrote one of the finest dystopia novels of our time" **@kdastkirkhan**

What do you think? Let us know on Twitter or Facebook

Review. "A detective story is very easy to write badly, but difficult to write well. There is so much you have to fit into 80- or 90,000 words – not just creating a puzzle, but an atmosphere, a setting, characters.

"It is possible to remain within the constraints and conventions of the genre and be a serious writer, saying something true about men and women and their relationships and the society in which they live."

James was born in 1920, and raised during what is generally accepted to be the golden age of the detective novel – at that time one of the few genres in which female authors were the most successful. Agatha Christie, Ngaio Marsh, Dorothy Sayers; for any girl with a strong interest in reading, crime novels offered a generous supply of potential role models. The fact that James had an unusually pronounced fascination with death only made them more irresistible. In later life, James often described her childhood mindset as follows: "When I heard, 'Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,' I thought, 'Did he fall or was he pushed?'"

It was the heyday of the comfortable murder-mystery. An amateur called to some stately pile to decipher the puzzle-box of somebody's death, with little thought paid to the life lost, the savagery of the murder, or the emotional fallout that would follow. James admired the intricate construction of their plotting, yet they never resonated with the life that she knew.

Her parents had little money, and a university education for their daughter was well beyond their means. James left school at 16 to work full-time. By 21 she was married, and her husband, Connor, was soon called to serve in World War II, leaving her with two daughters to feed as the bomber planes droned overhead. When Connor finally came home he was a different man, beaten down by a mental illness that was never officially linked to his experiences as a doctor in the combat zone. The absence of that link meant he was denied his war pension, and yet he was also far too ill to work. James had another mouth to feed on her meagre medical administrator's wage, one who would be in and out of hospitals until his death at the age of 44.

> "A DETECTIVE STORY IS VERY EASY TO WRITE BADLY, BUT DIFFICULT TO WRITE WELL"
> PD JAMES

By the time James finally attempted to write her first novel in 1959, she was no stranger to pain, struggle and compassion. But she was reluctant to use those difficult memories as creative currency – to 'write what you know'. Instead, she opted for certainty, a framework that she could use all her life experience to bend and twist until it looked like something new.

"I didn't hesitate long before I decided to try to write a detective story," she recalled to *The Paris Review*. "The detective story being a popular genre, [I thought] it would have a better chance of being accepted for publication." And so it proved: the novel that would eventually be called *Cover Her Face* was accepted by Faber, the first publisher James had contacted in what she assumed would be an arduous search.

30 years after the publication of *Cover Her Face*, James had ascended to become one of the finest authors around. That kind of judgement didn't bother her one bit, to the point where she had rarely even contemplated straying from the empowering restrictions of crime. Until one day in the early Nineties.

"I read in a newspaper about the dramatic and totally unexplained fall in the sperm-count of western man. The fall is 50 per cent in as many years. That is absolutely astonishing," she said in an interview with *Book Beat*. "I wondered what it would be like if, instead of it happening very gradually, in one year all over the world the human race became infertile and no new babies could be born – 25 years after that, what kind of an England would we have? In the minds of everyone on Earth the human race is dying out, so there's not much point in anybody working. When

The film took substantial liberties with James' novel.

Like other authors, PD James has been reluctant to label her work 'science fiction'.

In *The Children Of Men*, humanity has basically given up.

you consider it, much of what we do depends on somebody coming after us. It's all bound up in the idea that the human race goes on."

James consulted scientists to establish theories as to why this startling change was taking place, but couldn't build a consensus. She read articles that explored the reality of extinction, many of which drew attention to the fact that, like every other species, the decline and disappearance of humans is basically inevitable. The idea, "possessed me extraordinarily powerfully," she later said, and she knew the best possible method of confrontation: she would write about it, and explore the personal, cultural and sociological impact of the irrevocable demise of our species.

"I wasn't interested in making a sci-fi film," Cuarón explained to *Filmmaker Magazine* when quizzed on his decision to take only a premise and some names from *Children Of Men*'s source material. Had he taken the time to read James' interviews from the time of the book's publication in 1992 he might actually have picked up a copy. Like Cuarón, she also never intended to produce a work of science fiction, and would take the time to correct the many critics and journalists who made that assumption.

"I don't like it to be thought of as science fiction, because it isn't a very different world to the one we know," she said to *Book Beat*. "After Year Omega there are very few scientific advances of any kind, because scientists all over the world are directing their energies to trying to cure the infertility. Medicine has developed, and the human race is very good at keeping people alive for a very long time. Otherwise… I don't feel it's an alien world in any way."

It may be that Cuarón didn't realise that sci-fi could be set in the present, and not some distant future. Or that James had never read Philip K Dick, Ursula K Le Guin or the many others who proved that sci-fi doesn't have to be about rayguns and aliens.

Between both unconvincing alibis, it is James who disappoints the most. After all, she is the person who told *The Guardian* that she has never felt the need to do "something better than crime. I very much respect the detective story." If only she would afford that same respect to another unfairly maligned genre.

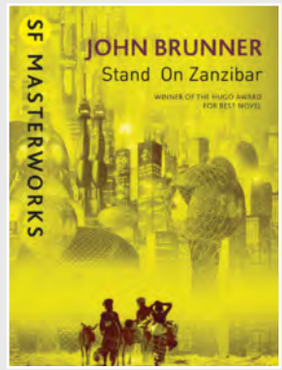
But no matter. *The Children Of Men* is a science fiction novel, Alfonso Cuarón's *Children Of Men* is a science fiction film, and both are very worth your time. The rest is just posturing.

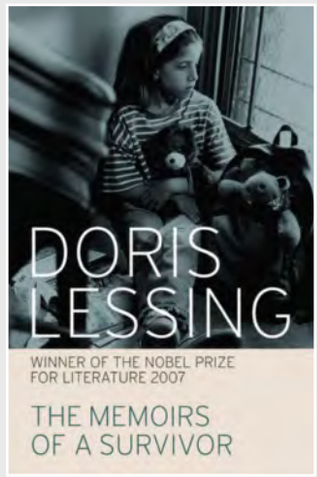
Where Have I Seen This Before?

EMBRACING THE END OF DAYS

STAND ON ZANZIBAR

The Children Of Men is concerned with the steady decline of the global population, while the opposite, overpopulation, is a more common theme. Within that category, John Brunner's 1969 novel, a masterful example of world-building, really takes some beating. When SF authors list their favourite novels, *Stand On Zanzibar* is often among them.





THE MEMOIRS OF A SURVIVOR

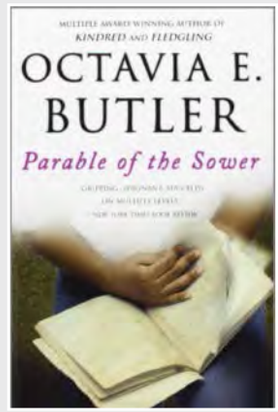
A common practice among authors who would rather not identify their work as science fiction is to adopt the term 'dystopian fiction' instead. PD James has done just this in several interviews, and the same descriptor has been applied to Doris Lessing's 1974 novel, which explores the dissolution of the family unit in the aftermath of unspecified calamity.

THE HANDMAID'S TALE

The fact that Margaret Atwood has never been comfortable with her stories being categorised as sci-fi is just one similarity with James. With *The Handmaid's Tale*, the resemblance also exists in the plot, which is set in a society perverted by chronic infertility. This is Atwood's most famous novel, and is sci-fi whether she likes it or not.

SOYLENT GREEN

This 1973 sci-fi film has one of the most famous twists in cinema history, and if you've managed to avoid spoilers for that long then we're not about to ruin it now. But it is primarily concerned with a unique solution to overpopulation in a future society, and the story is told in the form of a police procedural. Fans of PD James other novels will appreciate.

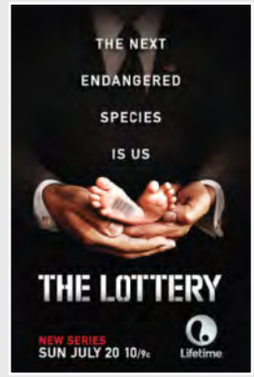


PARABLE OF THE SOWER

The influence of James' beliefs on *The Children Of Men* is impossible to miss, and there is a rich vein of science fiction in which faith plays a major role – either through the worldview of the author or the explicit content of the story. For the latter, Octavia Butler's *Parable Of The Sower* and its sequel, *Parable Of The Talents*, are among the very best.

THE LOTTERY

Alfonso Cuarón was so eager to find his own path that he refused to read the novel, assigning the responsibility to his screenwriter, Tim Sexton, instead. Sexton then used the ideas that weren't incorporated into Cuarón's film as the basis for this TV series in 2014. It aired for a single season on the US network Lifetime. Rightfully, few have mourned its passing.

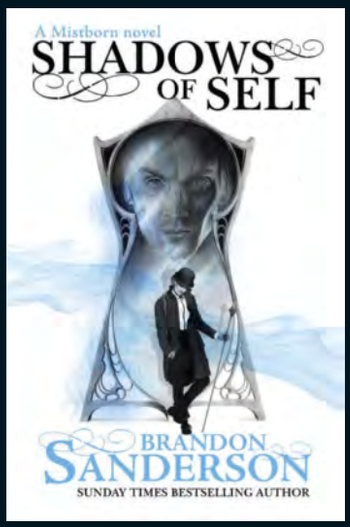


IN THEIR OWN WORDS SPECIAL

A Beginner's Guide To Brandon Sanderson

The author of the Mistborn series takes us through his inspirations WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

Which author would you like to see tackled next?
Let us know on Twitter or Facebook



Brandon Sanderson has established himself as one of the most exciting fantasy authors working today. The creator of the *Mistborn* series, *The Stormlight Archive* and many more, he has garnered legions of fans with the worlds that he has created, and was chosen to finish Robert Jordan's *Wheel Of Time* series.

He's also one of the genre's most prolific writers, which makes choosing a good place to start a little tricky, but we'd suggest the incredibly fun fantasy saga *Mistborn* – comprised of the Original trilogy, a standalone and the *Wax And Wayne* trilogy that is currently being published – or the brilliantly action-packed *Warbreaker*.

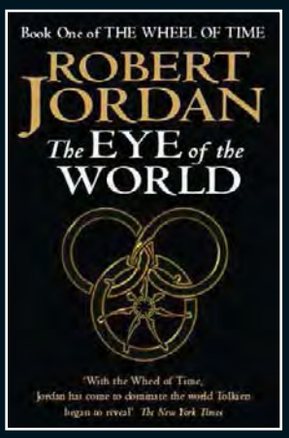
Somehow, among it all, Sanderson also finds time to teach creative writing at Brigham Young University in Utah.

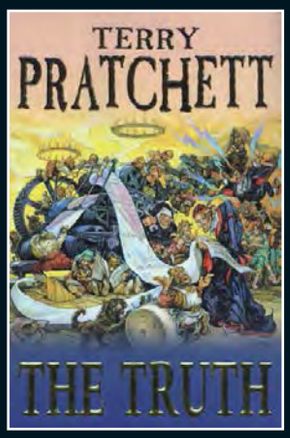
His latest novel, *Shadows Of Self*, is the latest in his acclaimed *Mistborn* series, and in a very special Beginner's Guide we asked Sanderson to select the books that have been most important to him as a writer and as a fan of the genre. "Like most writers, I find it a thrill to talk about books that are important to me," he writes. "Books have shaped my life, transforming me into the person I am today. Without them, I certainly wouldn't be a writer – and instead of writing stories about grizzled sheriffs who can use their own bullets to fly, I'd be an insurance actuary or something.

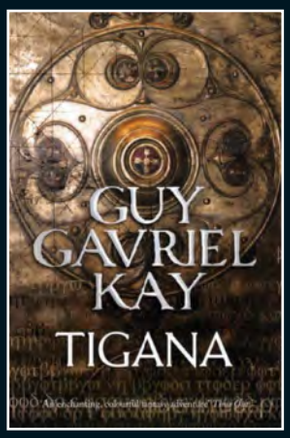
Therefore, it's important for me to start this discussion with the books that first grabbed me and made a reader out of me."

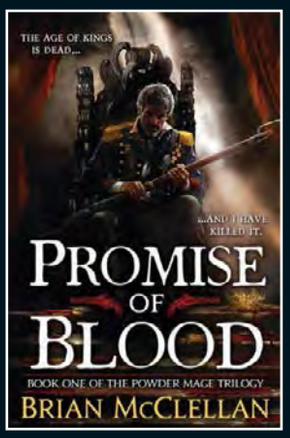
Brandon Sanderson at a book signing.

He cites the fiction of Terry Pratchett as one of his main inspirations.









Saving the kingdom

How To Slay Your Dragon: a guide

DRAGONSBANE
Author: Barbara Hambly
Publisher: Open Road Media & Sci-Fi
Published: 1985
Price: £5.62

"I truly credit this book – *Dragonsbane* – as the one that sucked me into the fantasy child. I was a drifting eighth grader at the time, and while I'd read some fantasy books, I didn't really understand it was a genre. It was in reading this book, which a teacher gave to me, that I truly found myself.

"This genre became my home, and I furiously staked my claim on it. Like a squatter with a gun and a sour attitude, I've refused to move out ever since."

"Dragonsbane is another of my favourite books. Reread that almost as soon as I finished it. Gorgeous fantasy! #BookClub" **@miffyWhinge**

Inventing the wheel

An epic journey from the beginning

THE EYE OF THE WORLD
Author: Robert Jordan
Publisher: Orbit
Published: 1990
Price: £9.99

"[This] was the first 'big' series I remember discovering on my own. *The Wheel Of Time* taught me several things. First, it expanded the fantasy genre away from many of my familiar tropes, through some baby steps. There were no dragons, but instead men bearing such titles. The magic was inventive and bizarre. Politics, the fate of nations, history and lore all played out in these books with a depth beyond anything I'd read so far save Grandpa Tolkien himself."

"'Blood & bloody ashes' It's fantastic, I picked it up in my 20s. Loved Perrin, Loial & Nyneave. #BookClubhellions" **@bookbint**

Discworld discovery

Journalism can be a dirty business

THE TRUTH
Author: Terry Pratchett
Publisher: Corgi
Published: 2000
Price: £7.99

"I've written at length about my love of Sir Terry's work, and I cried with the rest of the fantasy world when we lost him. *The Truth* is the book that hooked me on his writing. I came to Pratchett late; I tried *The Colour Of Magic* during my youth, but it didn't grab me. When I jumped into something more contemporary of his, I was struck by his absolute brilliance as a writer. Sir Terry taught me the level of commentary and theme you can inject into a book, all without overwhelming the reader. Truly a genius."

"Amazing! But is not everything written by Sir Terry Pratchett amazing...? #BookClub" **@The_LizMarshall**

Final fantasy

Historical fantasy at its finest

TIGANA
Author: Guy Gavriel Kay
Publisher: Harper Voyager
Published: 1982
Price: £9.99

"I consider Guy to be the greatest living fantasy writer, and basically any book you pick up of his, you're going to have a good time. The sheer beauty of the prose, the deep themes, the brilliant world-building. I can't say enough about how great his books are. They taught me more about writing than anything else. Though many argue that *The Lions Of Al-Rassan* is his masterpiece, I consider it to be *Tigana* – but his newest work, *Under Heaven* and its sequel, are majestic as well."

"It's been years, but I read it several times. Thought it was really good, but took awhile for me to get into it. #BookClub" **@redqueen76**

Author's apprentice

Decidedly grown-up stories

PROMISE OF BLOOD
Author: Brian McClellan
Publisher: Orbit
Published: 2014
Price: £8.99

"Brian McClellan was one of my students. I can't legitimately take any credit for Brian's work, as he was writing on a high level before he joined my class. However, it's been a source of pride to me to see that the generation after me is continuing the tradition of expanding the fantasy genre, doing interesting things with it. Brian's 'flintlock fantasy' is doing great things for fantasy, pushing it in interesting directions, and further helping us explore this amazing genre that has captivated us all."

"Awesome book. Highly recommended. #BookClub" **@michaelscurtis**

Your Five AI's In Fiction

CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE @SCIFINOW ON TWITTER

1. Lovey

"Lovey from *#SmallAngry Planet* would she have been better with a body?" **@BookBint**

2. Daneel Olivaw

"In the stories, he is the first humanoid robot, I love how he truly sees Lije as a 'friend' and he can 'read' human emotions. #BookClub" **@petiteandroid**

3. The Minds

"Iain M Banks' Minds from the *Culture* sequence. To semi-plagiarise HG Wells, they are vast and cool and sympathetic." **@TimMcNulty**

4. Marvin

"Marvin the Paranoid Android and the remarkably stupid tank he meets that blows the floor away, tumbling to its demise" **@mangozoid**

5. Earth Central

"Two most interesting may be Earth Central from Neal Asher *Polity* series, and Asimov's VIKI which both threaten humanity." **@ParsonsFiction**

Details **Author:** Chuck Wendig **Publisher:** Voyager **Price:** £17.99 **Released:** Out now

ZEROES

Black hats or white hats?

Crackpot theories be damned, the government really *is* onto us – or at least that's what the black-hat hacker crew known as Zeroes have realised. When the rag-tag team is apprehended from all across America and forced to work together in the Hunter Lodge for the United States government or face being imprisoned for years, they uncover that the NSA artificial intelligence known as Typhon is not what it seems at all.

What follows is a heart-stopping thriller chock-full of quick-paced action that brilliantly juxtaposes with the calmer, more analytical notion of the privacy and morality issues of black hats turning white in an ever-connected world. Chuck in a terrifying, dread-inducing assassin that could give the Terminator a run for its money, and Typhon the well-conceived, sinister piece of AI that Wendig cunningly releases sporadic whispers of, and the result is an enthralling storyline.

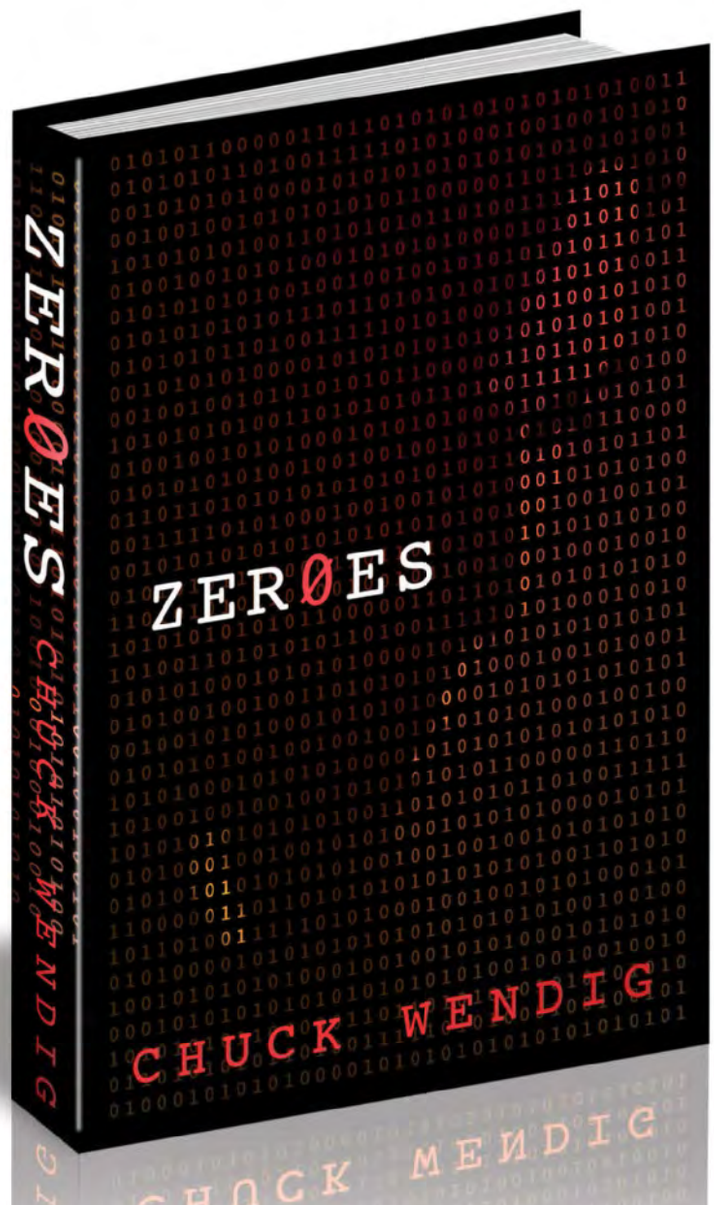
The only obstacle to this otherwise brilliant piece of cyberpunk neo-noir though is the fact that it's difficult to trudge through until you are halfway into the book. Prior to that, *Zeroes* is a messy, patronising affair where events are unnecessarily seen through each of the five Zeroes' eyes as they happen – we really don't need to watch, hear and imagine one of the characters smashing up his computer from five perspectives.

It's also a shame that it's saturated with an excessive amount of unsubtle pop culture references that are factually wrong; like a "shining Charizard" Pokémon card that is referred to (it's "shiny" not "shining"), or plain crude like the chapter titled "Trololol". It feels lazy to force so many 'everyday' references out of the Zeroes' mouths, in an effort to make the otherwise half-baked characters relatable. Until you get to these points though, Wendig is very much a 'show, don't tell' author, and he exhibits this skill flawlessly during the more gripping sequences. But in his quest to remind the reader of the how real the threat of 'Big Brother' is in today's world, and what seems to be a side mission in which he boasts his own relevance, some parts feel unhinged and lacklustre.

To be fair to Wendig though, *Zeroes* is a very meta novel that knows what it's doing and on which side of the privacy debate it stands. Not only is its discussion of the trials and tribulations of privacy versus state and security, the morals behind turning black hat hackers and terrorists into white hats and the capabilities of the World Wide Web engrossing, it also draws in real-life examples of Edward Snowden and Julian Assange as its raison d'etre. *Zeroes* sometimes doesn't take itself too seriously at all, by making the other characters poke fun at team member Wade Earthman, who serves as the resident conspiracy theorist-cum-cypherpunk. It's just that in this instance, and what a convenience it is, that Wade turns out to be right.

Carrie Mok

"ZEROES IS A VERY META NOVEL THAT KNOWS WHAT IT'S DOING AND ON WHICH SIDE IT STANDS"



SciFiNow scored **7** for Zeroes

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Ready Player One
Ernest Cline
Pop culture references and VR encompass this approachable, dystopian, future classic.

Details **Author:** David Wong **Publisher:** Titan Books **Price:** £7.99 **Released:** Out now

FUTURISTIC VIOLENCE AND FANCY SUITS

Slackerpunk

Chances are, if you know the name David Wong, you know his mad slacker horror *John Dies At The End* books, which showed a fiercely creative imagination. His first non-JDATE novel should appeal to die-hard fans while showing he's a dab hand at action sci-fi too.

In the not-too-distant future, broke barista Zoey is suddenly attacked by a guy who wants to eat her and broadcast it. She's rescued by the hologram of a mysterious man named Will Blackwater, who directs her to the Las Vegas-like city of Tabula Ra$a, where she learns that her long-absent father was an absurdly wealthy and incredibly powerful man who has just died, leaving everything to her.

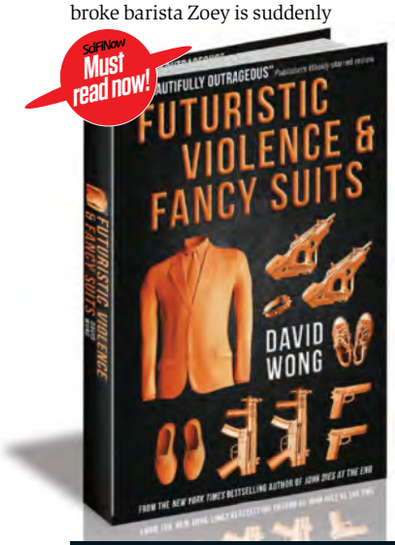
Unfortunately, there's also the fact that she is now the target for a group of jacked-up misogynist psychopaths who have been augmented by scary technology and want all that money. Oh, and they want to murder her in the most horrible way possible, because that's how they roll.

Wong's trademark sense of humour is still very much present (the opening chapters snarkily let us know that chilli is still known as "chilli"). Zoey is a heroine with a sharp tongue and a backbone, first to call out the ridiculousness of her situation, but also to suggest the most humane solution. The book's near future, with its constant first-person streaming, bloodthirsty audiences and grotesque new Vegas is worryingly plausible, and the testosterone-addled, brain-dead, women-hating rage monsters that make up the book's villains are heavily reminiscent of a certain women-hating online community.

Although it's packed with sharply observed detail, interesting side characters and Zoey's cat Stench Machine, once *Futuristic Violence & Fancy Suits* gets going it's pretty breakneck stuff.

Hilarious, thrilling and compulsively readable, this is a highly recommended read.

Jonathan Hatfull



8 SciFiNow scored **8** for Futuristic Violence And Fancy Suits

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Apocalypse Now Now
Charlie Human
A porn-dealing high school outcast is recruited by an alcoholic monster-hunting bounty hunter, and it's brilliant.

Author: William Gay **Publisher:** Faber & Faber **Price:** £12.99 **Released:** Out now

LITTLE SISTER DEATH

Southern Gothic

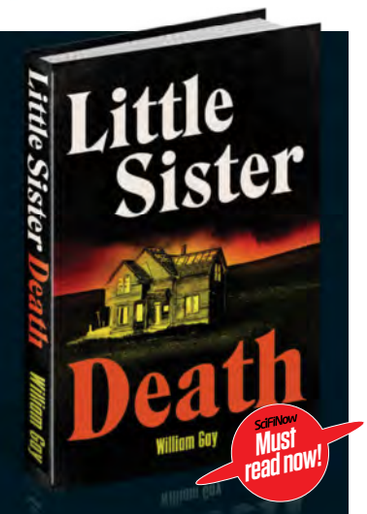
What better place to write a horror novel than a haunted house? When struggling novelist David Binder moves his wife and daughter into the former Beale mansion, he's hoping to use the legend of the Beale Witch to write the book that will make his fortune. But as anyone who's ever seen a horror movie can tell you, that's not exactly how things are going to play out.

Drawing on the allegedly true story of the Bell Witch – the same legend that inspired *The Blair Witch Project* – this 'lost' novella by the late William Gay dances through history, exploring hundreds of years' worth of tragedy that all happened in the same creepy house. The writing is gorgeous; descriptive, rich and musical, with a Southern accent so thick you'll wish author William Gay could've read it to you. It's compelling – and short – enough that it's possible to read in a single sitting. That's probably how it's best enjoyed: as a single gulp of deliriously macabre mystery.

This isn't a book that'll stand up to close scrutiny. It's all atmosphere and mood, packed full of moments of horror and weirdness that, individually, are effective enough, but don't come together to form a coherent whole. It ends abruptly, abandoning Binder and his family in the middle of their story, stranded in the remains of a history they'll never understand.

Perversely, that might make it even more unnerving than if it'd had a tidier ending. It's the kind of book that stays with you long after you've closed the cover – while you might not remember the details of the plot, there are plenty of eerie images and haunting ideas that'll snag in your brain, waiting for the perfect late night moment of vulnerability to resurface and creep you out all over again.

Sarah Dobbs



8 SciFiNow scored **8** for Little Sister Death

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

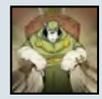
IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Little Friend
Donna Tartt
Set in the deep South – complete with mysticism, murder and snake-charming.

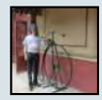
YOUR READS

What you lot have been reading this month

"I am currently reading the *Stargate Atlantis: Legacy* series - I am nearly half way through the 7 book series. #BookClub" **@MidNiteShadow7**



"*Star Wars: Order 66*. Yes, very much enjoying it! #BookClub" **@TheScoobyDoom**

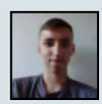


"I'm currently reading *The Thousand Autumns Of Jacob de Zoet* by David Mitchell. Not bad, so far. #BookClub" **@Harlegator68**

"Tracer. Meh. Was told it was a fast paced story and a non stop read. Ha ha was a load of tosh. #BookClub" **@chefyego**

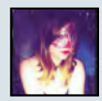
"*How To Rebuild Our World After The Apocalypse* by Lewis Dartnell. Sounded useful. #bookclub" **@TheCrowLady**

"Volume One of *The Lyttelton Hart-Davis Letters*. Delightful and relaxing. #BookClub" **@mamacrow**



"Read *The Walking Dead* Vol 2. Just as good as the first one, but with more characters. #BookClub" **@Jbarnes532**

"Reading *Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Secrets* for the second time, really really enjoying it, JK is a legend!! #BookClub" **@RockingRhys**



"*The First Fifteen Lives Of Harry August* by @ClaireNorth42. Enjoying how the narrative veers between lives without you getting lost. #BookClub" **@Cascararogue**

"Robin Hobb's awesome 2nd book in *Fitz & The Fool* series... *Fool's Quest*. #bookclub" **@GAMEKeighley**

Tell us **what you're reading** on Twitter or Facebook

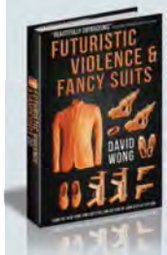
60 SECONDS WITH David Wong

How would you pitch *Futuristic Violence And Fancy Suits* to readers who may be unfamiliar with your previous output?
A young woman who comes from a trailer park and her very smelly cat must wage a war against a horde of cybernetically enhanced supervillains. Hopefully she will take it easy on them.

Was it a conscious decision on your part to move away from the *John Dies At The End* universe?
Well, you don't want to just write the same thing all the time. Ian Fleming, for instance, had all sorts of other great novels aside from the James Bond series (probably – I didn't have a chance to check).

Could you tell us about the creation of the heroine, Zoey? Is there anyone in particular she was inspired by?
You know now in the Marvel universe, all of the key players are sexy, superhuman demigods? You've got a sexy, glib billionaire, a sexy Norse God, a sexy female karate assassin... everyone is a beautiful genius with extraordinary abilities (even Ant-Man is played by the beautiful and witty Paul Rudd). Well, I tried to think of someone who would least fit into that story, and came up with Zoey Ashe – an impoverished, bitter and sarcastic woman who struggles with her weight, loves her stinky cat, and thinks both the supervillains and heroes in this story are a bunch of posturing buffoons.

How have you found the balance between writing for Cracked and the novels?
I haven't. The balance comes from the fact that I have no hobbies outside of work, and I see my friends about twice a year. All of my vacation time and weekends are devoted to writing novels. I wouldn't recommend this to anyone! It's like that year that Jeremy Renner was in like six movies because he was afraid that if he said no, they'd stop asking.



Futuristic Violence And Fancy Suits by David Wong is available to buy now, published by Titan Books. His other books include *John Dies At The End* and *This Book Is Full Of Spiders.*

Author: Christopher Fowler **Publisher:** Solaris **Price:** £7.99 **Released:** Out now

THE SAND MEN Desert paradise

An exclusive resort proves to (somewhat unsurprisingly) be full of terrible secrets in the latest chiller from Christopher Fowler.

The Sand Men begins with the Brook family arriving in Dubai, where Roy has landed a lucrative job working on the nearly-completed-but-still-deeply-troubled Dream World beach complex. Daughter Cara is sent to the local English language school, and quickly befriends her fellow teens, but former journalist Lea finds herself at something of a loss in a place where the wives are expected to be idle.

As she begins to befriend the more outspoken members of the ex-pat community, she starts to learn more about the strange accidents and disappearances that have plagued the project. Are the locals really as dangerous as the security chief says? Why is Roy suddenly so completely dedicated to his work? As the death toll begins to steadily climb, Lea realises that there is something terrible going on beneath the surface of Dream World.

Fowler begins his novel with a quote from JG Ballard, and the author's influence is heavily at play here, as the wealthy Westerners' disaffection might cover something truly awful. The world outside the gates of the compound is violent, seedy and potentially dangerous, as the money (and appetites) pouring in from around the world clash with the local beliefs and tradition. The divisions between those willing to tow the line and those who want to dig deeper are expertly drawn with very well-written characters, and Fowler creates a suffocating, compelling powder keg with a fuse that may have been lit long before Lea ever arrived.

Things do start to unravel a little as the buried truths are unearthed, but this is a gripping piece of work that allows its horrors to seep in slowly, creating a wonderful sense of dread.
Jonathan Hatfull

SciFiNow scored **7** for The Sand Men
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

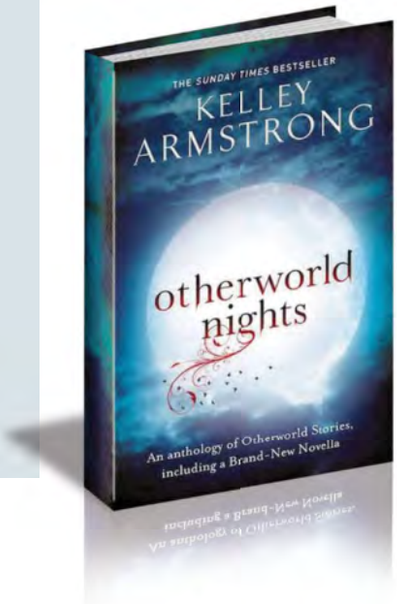
IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Super-Cannes
JG Ballard
The husband of a doctor hired to work at an exclusive park discovers awful secrets.

Details **Author:** Kelley Armstrong **Publisher:** Orbit books **Price:** £8.99 **Released:** Out now

OTHERWORLD SECRETS Pick 'n' mix fiction

SciFiNow Must read now!

The finest thing about a pick 'n' mix is the fact that you can have a little of everything you like the best, so if it works for sweets then it's sure to work for storytelling too. Kelley Armstrong's bag of literary confection is brimming with her *Women Of The Otherworld* characters in this assortment of short stories, the second of three anthologies.



There are six perfectly packaged treats on offer, beginning with half-demon Hope and her hubby Karl the werewolf, who reluctantly agree to steal a dangerous tome of unspeakable power. Alpha in training Elena winds up stranded in a bleak, snow-infested town in the second novella, as she and her husband Clay attempt to track what may be a ritualistic killer. Ex-black witch and part time angel, Eve has her holiday interrupted when the Fates ignore her annual leave entitlement and send her on a perilous mission.

Jaime the necromancer and Zoe the vampire each have their own bite-sized portion, dealing with unwanted visitors and bad attitudes. The big guns Paige and Lucas finish the show as they accept a case that leaves the witch and her cabal leader husband with major marital issues.

The beauty of this collection is the ability for each story to stand alone; obviously it helps to have met the characters before, but it's not essential, and you can happily wolf (if you'll pardon the pun) down everything without confusion. Armstrong provides enough background information for the reader to grasp who and what the characters are and how they all fit together.

Any newcomers to the *Otherworld* series will almost certainly feel the need to go back to the beginning and meet the younger versions of these well-developed and sophisticated characters, while old faithfuls will relish some more time and adventure.
Claire Nicholls

SciFiNow scored **8** for Otherwold Secrets
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

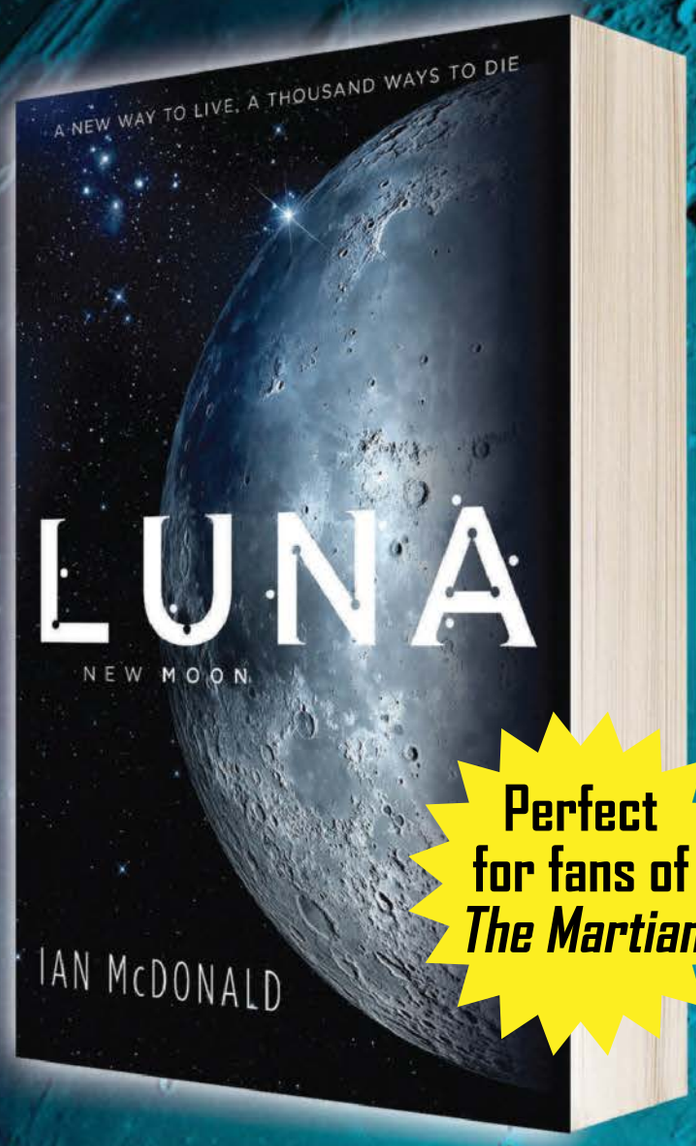
IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Shifting Shadows
Patricia Briggs
An anthology featuring urban fantasy heroine, Mercy Thompson the shapeshifting coyote and her crew of supernatural buddies.

If you thought

Mars was deadly,

wait till you see what the

Moon has in store . . .



Four time BSFA winner **Ian McDonald** is back with a tale of **power** and **survival**

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60 SECONDS WITH Jodi Taylor

How would you pitch the *Chronicles Of St Mary*'s series for a newcomer to the books?
Tales of time travel, history, love, catastrophe, friendship and tea. Meet the disaster-magnets from the St Mary's Institute of Historical Research as they hurtle around history, from the Cretaceous Period, to the fall of Troy, and a war-ravaged future Britain.

Then there's documenting, drinking tea and, if possible, not dying. Follow their adventures and discover history – the new sex!

Did you always intend for it to be a blend of genres? You managed to fit quite a lot in.
Yes, I always wanted a little bit of everything in the mix. I couldn't see why science fiction shouldn't also be about romance, adventure and comedy. I wanted to turn everything on its head.

For example, I wanted my academics to be as unacademic as I could possibly make them. And I wanted lots of the important stuff – history – because it's far more interesting than some people think.

And yes, I know a leading science fiction magazine is not the place to bang on about history, but I really can't help myself. Didn't my publishers warn you?

It must be great to be able to explore history with your readers through such a fun time-travel lens.
Yes – history is great. There's so much going on.

Some of my proudest moments are when people write to me saying that they were inspired to carry out further research on a particular event that I've written about. One lady always has her tablet with her when she reads, looking up various characters and events as they occur throughout the books.

Several people have written to say they wish history had been taught this way at school, and I don't know why it isn't.

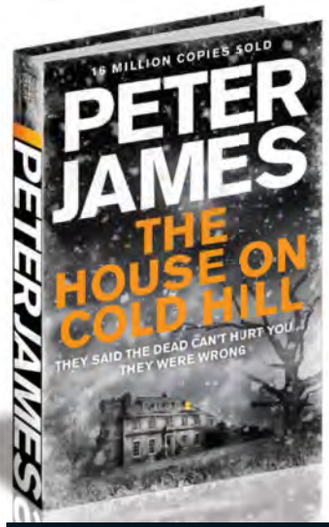
Book six in the *Chronicles Of St Mary's* series, *What Could Possibly Go Wrong?*, is available to buy from 19 November, published by Accent Press. Prequel *The Very First Damned Thing* is out now on Audible.

Details **Author:** Peter James **Publisher:** Macmillan books **Price:** £20 **Released:** Out now

THE HOUSE ON COLD HILL

Channelling the ghosts of the gothic

Featuring about as many tropes as a horror fan could gather from the harbinger of a title, *The House On Cold Hill* mixes some intricate and interesting cross-genre storylines with well-worn passages that provide intrigue, but not outright scares.



Cold Hill House is an old mansion latticed in mystery that has just been bought by a young family. While likeable, the central characters are all somewhat stock types, though extensive attention to detail brings minor characters to life in a manner that develops the landscape of the story as well as situating it as a particularly English novel in the manner of his other work.

While it is primarily a character study rather than a thriller, the story's build-up is severely hampered by underdeveloped and repetitive writing; the wind always "howls" and the lead characters always "pad" across floors. What's more, when James does use more imaginative language, it is so obviously a clue that the half-awake reader has seen the story's big reveals before the book's half-way point, which saps a lot of the scare factor. Compounding the problem, so many different genre strands are then criss-crossed that some key plot lines are simply not completed. This becomes frustrating as pivotal set pieces are not fully explored and, as a more serious structural fault, it means that the novel's gothic design feels like a false façade because stylised sections are not given enough background information to ring true.

Peter James' *The House On Cold Hill* is an entertaining, if rather unimaginative, multi-genre mystery with a staff of colourful characters but rather drab decor. Ultimately, it collapses under the weight of its own architectural ambition at the expense of a greater attention to detail.

Charlie Oughton

5 SciFiNow scored **5** for The House On Cold Hill
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
The Haunting Of Hill House
Shirley Jackson
This terrifying classic remains one of the definitive haunted house stories and is a must-read.

Authors: Joseph Fink, Jeffrey Cranor **Publisher:** Orbit **Price:** £16.99 **Released:** Out now

WELCOME TO NIGHT VALE

And now, the weather

SciFiNow Must read now!

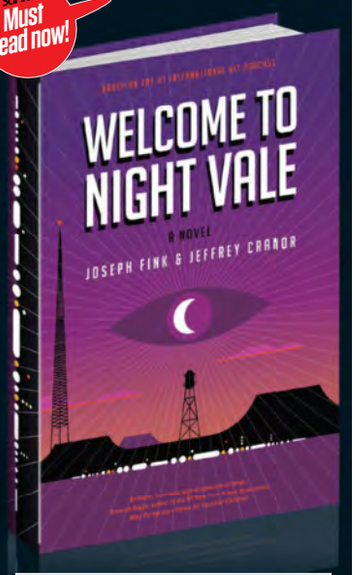
We're betting that if you're reading this review, you're one of many devoted listeners to Joseph Fink and Jeffrey Cranor's *Welcome To Night Vale* podcast, and are well acquainted with the small town's charming and often terrifying eccentricities, as told by radio host Cecil Baldwin. Now, they've dropped the usual structure and narrative voice for a (mostly) linear (kind of) mystery novel.

Our two leads are Jackie Fierro and Diane Crayton, who both receive a note saying 'KING CITY' from a man in a tan jacket. For Jackie, a 19-year old who has been 19 for what might be centuries, it throws her life into chaos. Meanwhile, the man's resemblance to Diane's ex-husband prompts a difficult situation between her and her shape-shifting teenage son. Their search for the truth will force them to face some dark truths, take serious risks, and face the terrifying monsters in the city library.

Much like the podcast, describing the plot of this novel is tricky and kind of pointless. The great strengths of *Night Vale* have always been its beguiling atmosphere, its sense of humour, and its brilliantly detailed oddities. Readers will find those here, and there are even regular Night Vale Radio intervals with Cecil. It's also fun to see characters from the podcast play important roles, like handsome scientist Carlos, the faceless old woman who secretly lives in your home, Old Woman Josie and her angels, and John Peters (you know, the farmer).

If you're a *Night Vale* newcomer we wouldn't recommend starting here; it drifts along at its own leisurely pace and there's a lot of in-jokes, but for fans this is an absolute must. It's an impressive feat to keep the *Night Vale* atmosphere (strange, funny, but oddly mournful) going for a whole novel, and it's a wonderful place to visit.

Jonathan Hatfull



8 SciFiNow scored **8** for Welcome To Night Vale
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
John Dies At The End
David Wong
Just as wilfully weird, but with a lot more dick jokes, this is a thrilling, scary, hilarious read.

★★★★

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Phoning Home

We talk to author William Kotzwinkle about putting ET into prose and writing the only official sequel to The Extra Terrrestrial, which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year

WORDS **JAMES CLARKE**

If you were a reader and a rabid fan of genre movies during the Seventies and early Eighties, the only ways to re-live a movie once it had been and gone from the cinema was either on the printed page or by listening to its soundtrack. It was a time when the film novelisation occupied a unique way for the uber-movie fan to revisit a favourite film without watching it. One of the major titles from the golden age of the novelisation was *ET: The Extra Terrestrial*, written by novelist William Kotzwinkle.

SciFiNow spoke with Kotzwinkle about his memories of working on the *ET* novelisation and its sequel, *ET: The Book Of The Green Planet*.

How did you come to write the *ET* novels ?

Spielberg had read my novel *The Fan Man*, and liked it. He must have let somebody at MCA know. At that time, MCA was the biggest talent agency in the world, and they also owned GP Putnam's publishing, which at the time was my publisher. So everybody got together and the fun began. When the script was given to me, I thought of him as the director of *Jaws*. He gave me a private screening of *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* in a marvellous little Universal Studios room with rows of plush seats and the sense that I was part of history. After all, *Flash Gordon's Trip To Mars* had been filmed at Universal. As I watched, I realised Spielberg was much more than the director of a scary film. He was a cinematic genius.

What were the challenges and opportunities in working in the world of *ET*?

For the first time in my life, I didn't have to worry about plot. The plot was taken care of. So I could give all my attention to the characters, to extending their dialogue and exploring their minds. I even got into the mind of the dog, who turned out to be a very amusing character. And I was in the mind of ET himself, which was the most fun of all. My desire was to explore the characters in a way that no film can ever do.

When I got the *ET* screenplay, I had the marvellous sensation that I was about to film a movie in my mind. I had no idea what the film would really look like, and the amazing thing was that in the end the book and the film had the same look and feeling, even though Spielberg and I were on different coasts most of the time. I couldn't help feeling we'd both been guided by the same extra-terrestrial emissary working behind the scenes so that we got it right. The idea was Spielberg's and he most certainly worked with Melissa Matheson on her wonderful script, and I followed it to the letter with pleasure, because it was a heavenly idea. But as regards the novelisation itself, he left me completely on my own. I remember being on the studio lot one day when his designer came up to him and said, "I know what ET's ship looks like." Spielberg waited. The designer said, "It looks like a teardrop made out of mercury." Without missing a beat Spielberg said, "No, it looks like a Victorian Christmas tree ornament." I know he pulled that right out of the air at that moment. And I also knew it was a perfect description, and that's how I worded it in the book. So he definitely had input there.

But to the best of my memory, that was the extent of his verbal contribution. He had confidence in me and I was filled with visions of *ET*. After the book sold 8 million copies, he very generously said to me, "The reason the book was so successful is that people saw it as a separate work of art." I certainly felt it was a work of art, and not just a quick copy of the script.

What was *The Book Of The Green Planet*'s genesis?

We had a cosmic hit, and nobody had expected that. We'd known it was a fine project, but we didn't know it would be a landmark film that would reverberate around the world. The book was number one on the bestseller list for almost a year. After this success, I met with Spielberg in New York. He said he wanted a book about ET going back to his own planet. He said, "Do it any way you want. But one thing I would like to see in the book is a creature I have in mind. It looks like a bunch of floppy socks." And of course it's in the book, and it's called the Flopglopple. It's a character readers really liked. ET's return to his own planet was Spielberg's idea, but the structure was mine. Except for ET, the characters were all mine; the forest was mine – the trees jumped around, I called them Jumpums – and every word of dialogue was mine. It was an original work of art. And when he read the book, Steven had no changes at all, and said that he loved it.

Why do you think that the character of ET resonated so powerfully?

At the end of *The Extraterrestrial*, ET takes a flower back with him to his own planet. His love for that flower helped me to realise that this was what he and his race of extraterrestrials were – they loved their planet with a deep, mystical love. I was touched by this love, which exists somewhere in the universe. I saw ET as a real guide appearing out of the cosmos to instil something into humanity. The movie is still enchanting, the magic is still there. And the book shares in the magic spell that was cast by lucky and inspired individuals. It became iconic because of the inherent strength of the idea and the eternal appeal of the little helper from the stars.

ET: The Book Of The Green Planet is available to buy online now, published by Berkley.

Spinoff central

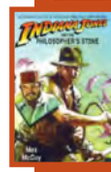
Five more intriguing examples of where movies meet novels

Splinter Of The Mind's Eye, Alan Dean Foster

In this, the first-ever sequel to *Star Wars*, Luke, Leia, C3PO and R2D2 undertake a mission that sees them landing on a jungle planet, running into Darth Vader and getting wrapped up in a quest for the Kaiburr Crystal. The Kaiburr Crystal had been an early plot device in George Lucas's earliest iterations of the screenplay for the original *Star Wars* movie. Foster who would go on to pen a number of movie novelisations, and will write the forthcoming adaptation of *The Force Awakens*. The book features an intriguing Ralph McQuarrie cover image, created specifically for the novel.

2010, Arthur C Clarke

The novel that became the relatively little-known movie sequel to Stanley Kubrick and Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. In *2010*, a crew of Russian and American astronauts embark on a journey to determine the outcome of the mission undertaken in *2001*.



The Indiana Jones novels

This was an extensive run of novels published through the early Nineties that sent Indiana Jones on a wide range of globetrotting adventures. Adventures included *The Genesis Deluge* and *The Dinosaur Eggs*. The novels were written by Max McCoy and Martin Caidin, and each featured a newly rendered Drew Struzan cover image.

Bram Stoker's Dracula, Fred Saberhagen

Based on Jim V Hart's screenplay for what became the Francis Coppola-directed adaptation of the Bram Stoker novel, Saberhagen was chosen after the success of his *Dracula* sequence books.

The Wild Things, Dave Eggers

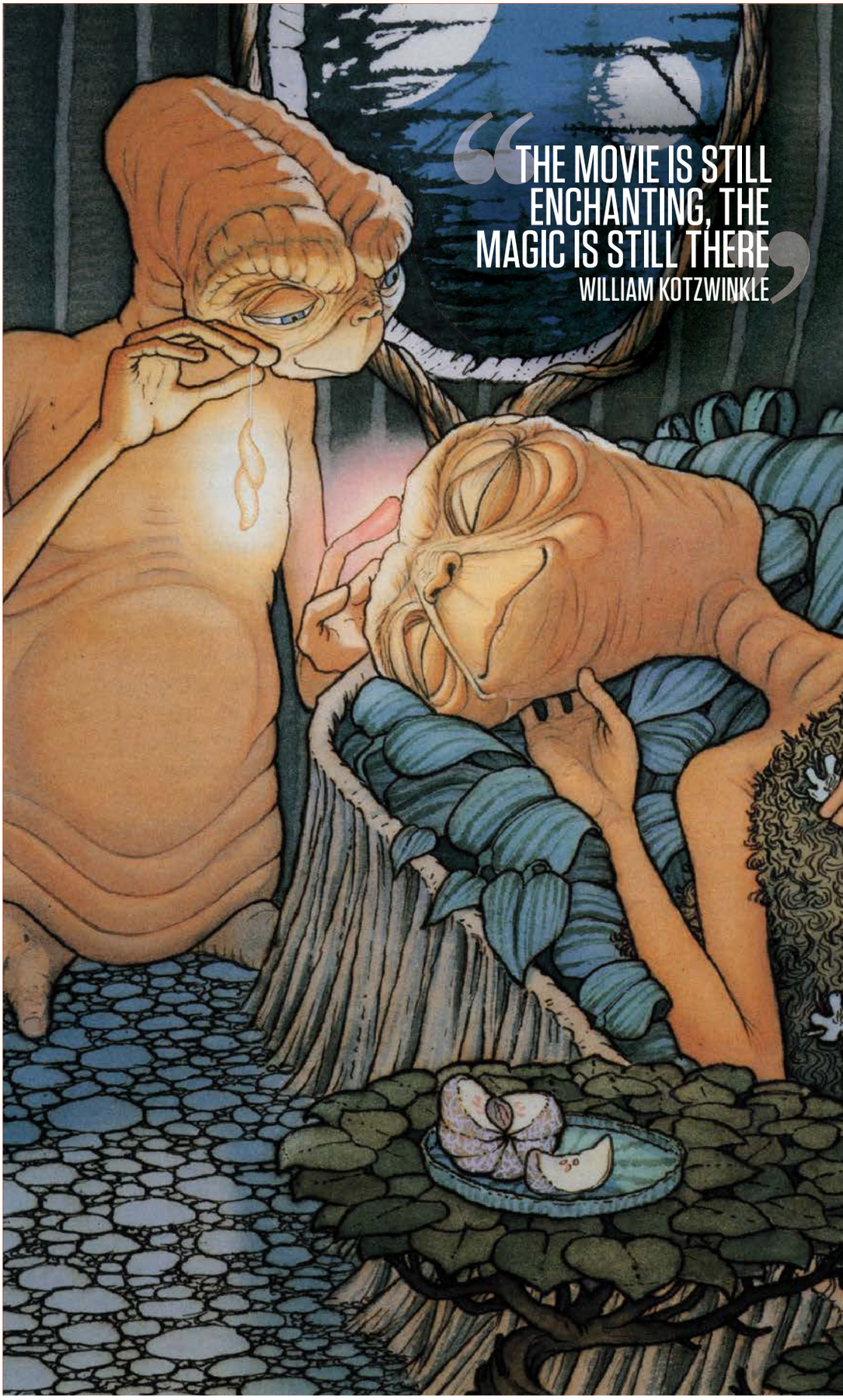
This is considered a 'companion piece' to the Spike Jonze movie adaptation of Maurice Sendak's landmark children's picture book, *Where The Wild Things Are*.

Kotzwinkle spoke highly of his time with Spielberg.

The Book Of The Green Planet **continued the story of ET.**

The book sees Elliott reunited with ET.

Will we ever see an on-screen sequel to *ET*?



Details **Writer:** Mark Millar **Artists:** Sean Murphy **Publisher:** Image
Price: £6.60 **Released:** Out now

CHRONONAUTS

A hell of a ride

Just as the Millarworld was in danger of becoming a rather sweet and syrupy place, imparting considered messages on the nature of heroism (hello *Starlight*), Mark Millar returns to the formula that fired superhero comics through the flimsy mucous membrane of the 20th Century and into the 21st with *The Ultimates*, *Wanted* and *The Authority*. Simply put, what if superheroes were real, *and* the people who got them were pricks?

Something of a companion piece to 2015's *MPH*, *Chrononauts* rephrases the question be replacing 'superheroes' with 'time travel'. The results, rendered by the scrappy and combative Sean Murphy (*Punk Rock Jesus*), is a suitably break-neck cross between *Doctor Who*, *Bill & Ted* and Rudyard Kipling's 1888 novella *The Man Who Would Be King* as two douche-bro time travellers abscond from their *Stargate*-style mission and decide to use modern tactics and technology to set themselves up as kings in Medieval Central Asia.

Forum warriors have been rehearsing their 'Mark Millar just writes film pitches and passes them off as comics' line for a few years now, and *Chrononauts* certainly feels filmic, but rather than something designed to be hawked around studios, it feels like a movie that has already happened.

Rather like *Starlight*'s mixture of *Flash Gordon*, *Buck Rogers* and David Gemmell's *Legend* that should have quietly appeared on the big screen in the late Eighties, a breathless romp, *Chrononauts* too feels like it belongs in the same jaw-agape blockbuster pantheon as *Back To The Future*, tipping its hat to the film at every turn with ponchos, paradoxes and a gorgeous variant cover.

James Hoare

8 SciFiNow scored **8** for Chrononauts
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
The Red Wing
Jonathan Hickman/Nick Pitarra
Brain-melting time-travel thriller from the reigning king of SF-infused weirdness.

Details **Writer:** Roman Dirge **Artist:** Roman Dirge
Publisher: Titan **Price:** £10.99 **Released:** Out now

SOMETHING AT THE WINDOW IS SCRATCHING

Close the curtains and pretend you're not in

Now best remembered as a collaborator on Nickelodeon's *Invader Zim*, Roman Dirge was one of the new gods of LiveJournal and Hot Topic during that earth-shattering period when Tim Burton dropped pumpkinheads for primates.

Alongside Vasquez and the rest of the Slave Labor Graphics roster of skull-doodlers, Dirge entrenched himself in the cutesy gothic pantheon with his 1998 *Lenore, The Cute Little Dead Girl*.

Recently re-released in hardcover and in colour for the first time, *Something At The Window Is Scratching* originally saw publication the same year as *Lenore*, but – unlike *Lenore* – it soon slipped from print.

There's clearly a reason – this anthology of illustrated poems is for fans of the sub-genre, but even they might be disappointed by the clunky and artificial colouring that smothers the stark simplicity of Dirge's imitable drawing style and that outsider, underground comix vibe that gave his work a certain amount of cache with the fanbase.

The content itself is a simple spin on traditional bedtime story cliché: the monster under the bed is actually your friend, or the mundane world is actually the monster, or, big surprise, the monster is actually a monster. But this rug had already been pulled up in various combinations by Tim Burton, not to mention prolific post-modern fairy-tale titans like Neil Gaiman, so even when *Something At The Window* was new, it wasn't.

James Hoare

4 SciFiNow scored **4** for Something At The Window Is Scratching
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories
Tim Burton
Still the best creepy kids book for all ages.

Details **Writer:** Robbie Morrison **Artist:** Brian Williamson
Publisher: Titan **Price:** £14.99 **Released:** Out now

DOCTOR WHO: FRACTURES

More of the same

The problem of writing with a reigning Doctor is what geeks of a certain age used to call "return to zero", the requirement that tie-in fiction leave behind nothing of consequence lest it interfere with the ongoing story.

Fractures, the second arc in the 'Titan's Twelve' series, is beginning to suffer from that, forced to tell an overly familiar story about otherworldly horrors that have infiltrated suburbia – the sort that the Russell T Davies-era delighted in ('Rose', 'Fear Her' et al). It's rather nostalgic in that regard, but it's simply a screensaver between series.

Brian Williamson's art is lovely though – he does a fantastic unimpressed Clara face – and Robbie Morrison has Peter Capaldi's dialogue down so faithfully that your brain does the rest, like a Big Finish adventure that only you can hear.

James Hoare

SciFiNow scored **6** for Doctor Who: Fractures
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

Details **Writer:** Si Spencer **Artist:** DIX **Publisher:** SelfMadeHero
Price: £14.99 **Released:** Out now

KLAXON

Estate of decay

Undeniably unsettling, Klaxon – the creator-owned urban horror from *Hellblazer* and *Books Of Magick* writer Si Spencer and critically acclaimed illustrator DIX – is a difficult book to hold down, proudly so in fact.

Similar, superficially to 2000 AD's stomach-turning underclass horror story *Cradlegrave* (by John Smith and Edmund Bagwell), *Klaxon* places storyline at a remove, instead focusing on its surreal and nightmarish visuals, as a waster looking for a way out becomes fascinated with the new girl next door. This obsession that attracts the attention of their grinning landlord and his baleful presence, a presence that begins to poison both households.

It's very much DIX's world, one of leering, waxy faces and hallucinogenic interludes, but the story itself never delivers up even a perfunctory answer to Kipling's basic set, especially his old friends how and why. It barely follows through on who, given the cast remain complete ciphers, shorn of motive or discernible character.

All that remains is simply some stuff that happens.

James Hoare

SciFiNow scored **4** for Klaxon
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

Details **Writer:** Gordon Rennie **Artist:** Simon Coleby **Publisher:** Rebellion
Price: £17.99 **Released:** Out now

JAEGIR: BEASTS WITHIN

Something for Nort thing

SciFiNow Must read now!

Bad guys have always been the most compelling subjects, and few get badder than Rogue Trooper's Norts, grotesque future war parodies of the Third Reich that belied the creator's war comic origins by bellowing "STAK!" in shock as the blue-skinned man-mountain disturbed their war crimes with his rippling muscles and smart weaponry.

It turns out that war crimes are still crimes, even in the fascistic Great Nordland Republic. Kapiten-Inspector Atalia Jaegir of the Nordland State Security Police has the unpopular job of swimming upstream against the effluence of public opinion to root out space bastards and bring them to justice, whatever the cost.

The Jaegir family have skeletons in their own closet, and the good Kapiten finds herself hunting genetic aberrations called Strigoi (as if the Norts couldn't get any more overbearingly gothic), men and women of deathly pallor who are driven to wipe out their own bloodline.

The sheer storytelling prowess of this gloomy military SF thriller is equalled only by the fascinating world-building of writer Gordon Rennie (*Judge Dredd*). It's unsurprising to discover he's got a few Warhammer 40,000 books in his back catalogue, given the byzantine politics, climate of fear and totalitarian chic between the two oppressive universes.

Simon Coleby is no stranger to Games Workshop either, having worked on the gone-too-soon *Warhammer Monthly* comic, but the aesthetic of Jaegir is all its own. Despite their scarred faces and blemished souls, our heroes are the best of Nordland: set jaws and unflinching senses of duty, and that sense of pride and purpose drips from every page, luring you into its unrelentingly gloomy worldview with disquieting ease.

James Hoare

SciFiNow scored **8** for Jaegir: Beasts Within
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Daemonifuge
Kev Walker/Jim Campbell
A lone space nun tackles demonic powers in this *Warhammer Monthly* gem, available in print on demand.

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DRAWN OF THE DEAD

The Walking Dead artist talks about how the hit series might end, and what happens if you ask him to draw Daryl Dixon

WORDS **CHRIS ANDERSON**

THESE DAYS, YOU WOULD HAVE TO BE A ZOMBIE NOT TO HAVE HEARD OF THE WALKING DEAD. THE TV SERIES SET NEW VIEWING RECORDS FOR A DRAMA SHOW ON US CABLE, SPAWNED SPIN-OFF SERIES FEAR THE *Walking Dead*, and is currently in its sixth season. The comic-book on which the live action is based is likewise experiencing success. Running for almost 12 years, its sales continue to climb, with the collected volumes forever dominating the graphic novel charts.

British artist Charlie Adlard, who resides in Shrewsbury, has drawn every issue since #7 – published back in 2004. His name appears as a co-creator in the opening credits of the TV show, and he featured in an episode as a zombie. But despite being a global phenomenon, Adlard is happy to fly the flag from this side of the Atlantic.

Over ten years on the same comic-book – that's quite an achievement...

Yeah, I mean don't get me wrong, 99 per cent of it has been a blessing. But it's the same with anybody... if you end up doing one thing which is incredibly successful, everything else gets sort of pushed back, and then people forget about the other stuff you've done. I was a professional comic-book artist for ten years before *The Walking Dead*, I have a big back catalogue – none of it apart from *The X-Files* was particularly popular, but I was still a jobbing artist for that long.

So you don't think of yourself as a zombie artist?

It's not like when I started on *The Walking Dead* that Robert [Kirkman, creator, writer and TV series executive producer] chose me because I drew good zombies. I didn't dislike them, but they weren't on my to-do list. When

people say to me, "Oh, you've redefined the modern horror comic," I have to admit, it's completely by default. I didn't set out to do that, but it's great that people say it.

Why did Robert choose you, then?
Robert and I knew each other via a mutual friend, the writer Joe Casey, so we'd met a couple of times at cons and chatted briefly, but then he emailed me out of the blue and asked if I'd be interested. I was in between jobs… so I took it as the next thing to do. I imagined I'd do it for six months and move on… and here we are, over a decade later [laughs]. But at that time, the comic was selling less than 10,000. These days it's more like 60,000 or 70,000.

What's it like working together on different sides of the Atlantic?
We used to not talk that often. We'd email all the time, and as the popularity grew we'd communicate even less because we'd just be so busy working on the thing. Now, we talk at least once every two weeks, because so much is going on, we don't want to lose anything that is important. But he is the one in the thick of it as far as TV is concerned. I don't feel that I'm one of the captains of this gigantic juggernaut, sailing through with all this responsibility. If I did start thinking about that, I'd probably just collapse into a gibbering heap. But I approach every issue exactly as I did ten years ago – get on with it, not think about it.

Is he quite specific about what he wants you to draw?
We've developed a kind of short-hand. Most of his direction is incredibly simple, and he leaves it up to me visually. If it's a new character or scene he specifically wants, then he might give a bit more detail.

What's it like seeing your name in the opening credits of the TV show?
It's still one of the most surreal experiences. I've seen it appear umpteen times, and I'm always like, "Oh wow, that's me."

Being a creator-owned project at Image, and with all of the success, has it been lucrative?
Yeah, it's no secret, I can pull back and be fine. I'm in the perfect position that when *The Walking Dead* finishes, I'll be able to do what I want – ideally spending more time on fewer projects and making them the best they can be.

Does that mean you've talked about ending it?

> ROBERT KEEPS SAYING HE'S GOT STORY IDEAS FOR MANY YEARS YET, SO WE'LL SEE
> CHARLIE ADLARD

We've talked about end points – either if the sales meant we had to finish, or if we just decided we wanted to. Robert keeps saying he's got story ideas for many years yet, so we'll see. I'd like to see it out definitely, and I'd like to go out with a bang, an event, whether it's five years in the future, ten years or more. The last thing I'd want is that it just fades away.

Who do you draw most at cons?
It's Rick, Michonne, zombies, Carl… occasionally I get asked to do more of the B-list, which is always quite pleasurable. Very, very rarely, someone will say, "Can you do Daryl?" I'll sort of give a quizzical look and raise an eyebrow, and say, "Really? Okay, sure, if you really want that." I'm not used to drawing him. Sometimes I give them a look to say, do you realise what you're saying could be insulting to me as an artist? I mean, it doesn't bother me, but pause, think about it…

The Walking Dead is published by Image Comics. Visit imagecomics.com for more details.

Rick and Michonne are two of the most commonly requested characters for Adlard to draw at conventions.

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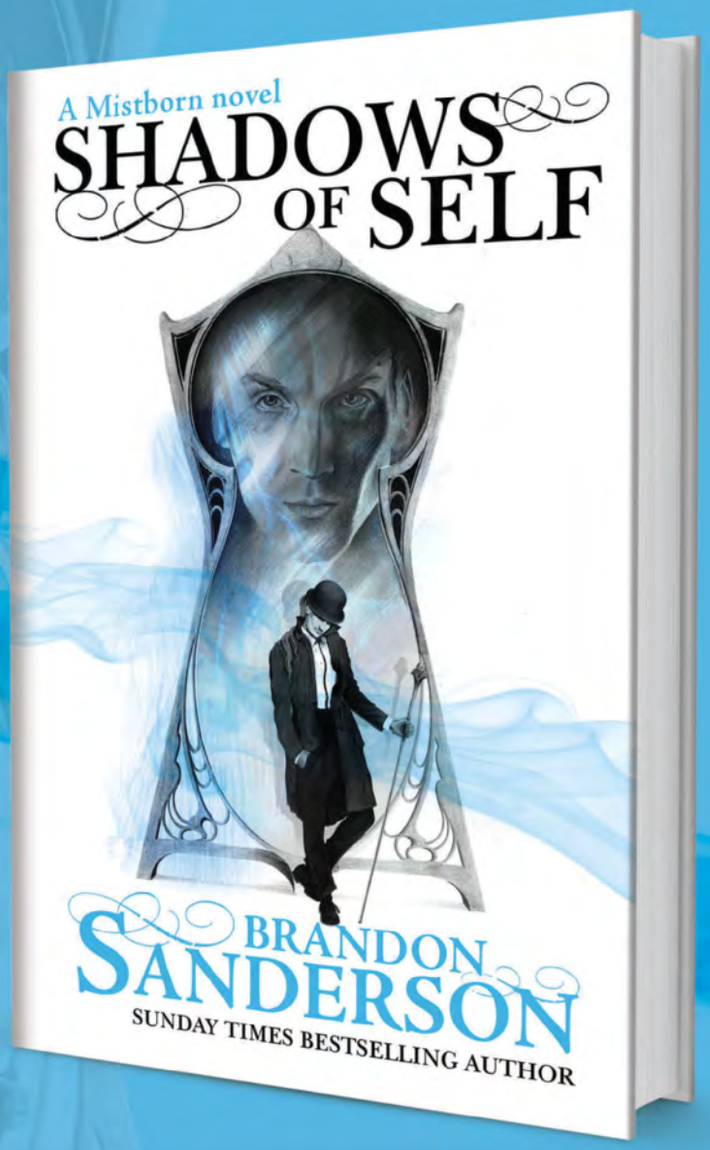

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AN IMAGINE MONTHLY

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO HERCULES THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS

IN THE EARLY NINETIES, SAM RAIMI AND ROB TAPERT AND THEIR COMPANY RENAISSANCE PICTURES RE-TEAMED FOR A SYNDICATED TV SERIES BASED ON HERCULES. THEIR COMBINATION OF ACTION-ADVENTURE, CG EFFECTS AND TONGUE-IN-CHEEK HUMOUR WAS AN INSTANT HIT, SPAWNING A HOST OF IMITATORS, INCLUDING A CERTAIN WARRIOR PRINCESS…

WORDS **JOE NAZZARO**

This is the story of a time long ago. A time of myth and legend, when the ancient gods were petty and cruel, and they plagued mankind with suffering. Only one man dared to challenge their power…

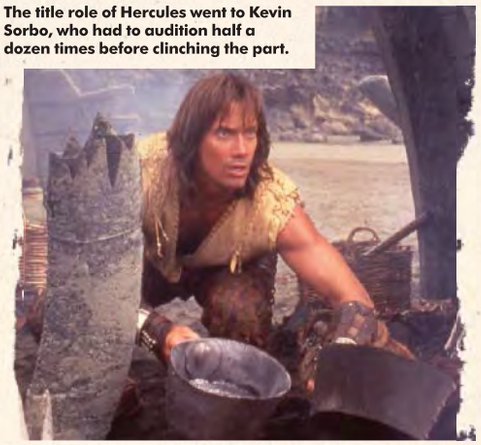
It was the early days of syndicated television, and Universal Television was putting together a series of action-orientated TV movies called the 'Action Pack'. Different movies would air on alternate weeks, one of which would be filled by a series based on the mythological hero Hercules. According to Rob Tapert, who produced the *Evil Dead* trilogy with director Sam Raimi, "They were going to do 24 two-hour movies as part of this 'Action Pack', so they approached us. [Executive] Dan Filie was a big fan of *Army Of Darkness*, and he wanted us to do a *Hercules* series with an *Army Of Darkness* sensibility.

"We knew that wouldn't work as a TV show, because it would be too goofy, so we started to spin some new ideas. At one point we said, 'How about *Conan* instead?' but they said, 'No, the rights are tied up, and they're going to do a third *Conan* movie!' so we came up with a new spin on *Hercules* by removing it from what you would consider the traditional Greek Parthenon and togas and stilted language, putting it in pre-Hellenic times, so to speak. That was kind of how we started in on *Hercules*. We did the five two-hour movies, and based on their success, they ordered a series."

In *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*, Kevin Sorbo played the eponymous demigod who wanders the mythological world, righting wrongs and battling monsters. As Tapert recalls, "The studio put a lot of pressure on us to put Dolph Lundgren in the role, so we approached Dolph with a big offer, and he turned it down, and boy are we glad he did! We were also fighting to get a big name for Zeus, so we begged and pleaded with Charlton Heston, who turned it down, and then we begged and pleaded with a bunch of other people, and finally time ran out. We shot the first of the two-hour movies, 'Hercules And The Amazon Women' with a Kiwi actor playing Zeus. We saw it, and went back to the studio and said, 'Guys, this two-hour movie is great, but we need somebody to bring weight to the role of Zeus!' They finally said okay, opened up their wallet, and we made an offer to Anthony Quinn."

While other members of the Action Pack met with varying degrees of success, *Hercules* was pretty much an immediate hit. Universal asked Raimi and Tapert to re-tool the series as 13 one-hour episodes. "Once we got the series," continues Tapert, "The first thing we had to do was kill Hercules' family, because in the two-hour movies we completed, in our own sloppy way, an arc for him. He's wandering around in 'The Amazon Women', and then he gets a family, has a mid-life crisis in the final movie, realises there's no place like home, and that completed his arc."

The title role of Hercules went to Kevin Sorbo, who had to audition half a dozen times before clinching the part.



Quinn opted out of the weekly series, having signed on for the initial batch of TV movies, and the producers instead decided to bring back the character of Iolaus as a recurring character. "My feeling is the series generally works better with a sidekick," claims Tapert, "Because it gives your hero somebody to talk to and to deliver the exposition. Michael Hurst was in the first movie, and I got into a huge fight with the guy who was an executive producer for that about bringing Iolaus back at the end, because they wanted to keep him dead. I said, 'No no, he's a great character!' so that was a big find."

Aside from Sorbo himself, there were three key elements that were carried over into the series. Number one was the rich collection of landscapes in New Zealand doubling for pre-Hellenic Greece. Number two was the over-the-top action that became a trademark of the series, and number three was the use of computer-generated visual effects, which were increasingly being used in big-budget features films, but were still largely untried on a television schedule and budget. "We knew right from the beginning that we wanted to tackle hydras and other mythological creatures," notes Tapert. "We were huge Harryhausen and stop-motion fans, but you couldn't do stop-motion on a TV schedule, so we were instantly into CGI. It was ⇨

"THE STUDIO WANTED DOLPH LUNDGREN IN THE ROLE"

ROB TAPERT

a real gamble, because they were just starting *seaQuest* at the time, and having a miserable time with all the CGI stuff on a television schedule. But we've gambled on entire lives on silly things like this, and it's always worked out."

The company chosen to tackle those complicated CG creatures was Flat Earth, who initially put together a sequence featuring a centaur to prove it could be done realistically. "Of all the stuff we did on the show, that was the most important effect we produced," remembers visual FX supervisor and Flat Earth chief Kevin O'Neill. "When we first sat down with Renaissance, they had been pitched by other companies to do these full 3D creatures, but I realised they couldn't afford to do that. What we were trying to create was an organic image out of two organic living things; in other words, it had to look like a living, breathing thing, and since centaurs are basically a combination of two living, breathing things that exist in real life, I figured if we could put them together, there was enough motion-control tracking ability in even medium-range equipment to do it.

"And then of course, Rob Tapert being the excellent producer he is would say, 'Could you do this…" so 'Hercules And Underworld' had one centaur, and then the episode 'As Darkness Falls' had several centaurs. And then it became, 'Can you have a bunch of people dragging a centaur around? Can you have a centaur rear up, with a woman in its arms?' I would say, 'I think we can!' and we did."

As for the show's over-the-top action sequences, "I think that was one of our main calling cards," notes showrunner John Schulian. "*Hercules* is an action show, so we were going to have fights. Hercules makes a point of saying he doesn't kill people, and if you look closely, he really doesn't kill people. They may wind up dead when they're fighting him, but it's usually that they're being hoisted on their own petard.

Michael Hurst was cast as Herc's sidekick Iolaus. He also went on to direct several episodes of the series.

Sorbo's real-life wife Sam Jenkins-Sorbo played Serena, aka the Golden Hind, in several Season Six episodes.

"It's a fine line we walked, and there were some episodes, one in particular, that I think really crossed the line, and was much too dark and violent. It was unpleasant to watch, because that's not what we were about. This is fun, this is escapist, the kind of stuff I would have watched as a kid, and that I would hope in 25, 30 or 40 years from now, if they're still showing re-runs of *Hercules*, people will still be able to enjoy it on any number of levels."

The first season of *Hercules* was not only successful enough to prompt a 24-episode second season, but it also generated a spin-off series as well. The final three episodes featured a mini-arc in which Hercules battles and eventually gets involved with a warrior princess named Xena (played by Lucy Lawless, who had appeared in one of the TV movies and a Season One episode in different roles), and it soon became obvious that something special was happening.

"I had always wanted to do a woman-superhero show, but could never figure out a spin on it," concedes

SUPPORTING CAST

Who's Who in the Hercules Universe

Iolaus (Michael Hurst)
Herc's best friend and sidekick.

Salmoneus (Robert Trebor)
Con-man and get-rich-quick businessman, but a dependable friend.

Autolycus (Bruce Campbell)
Self-proclaimed 'king of thieves,' frequent ally of Hercules and Xena.

Aphrodite (Alexandra Tydings)
Self-absorbed goddess of love.

Deianira (Tawny Kitaen)
Herc's late wife, murdered along with her children by Hera.

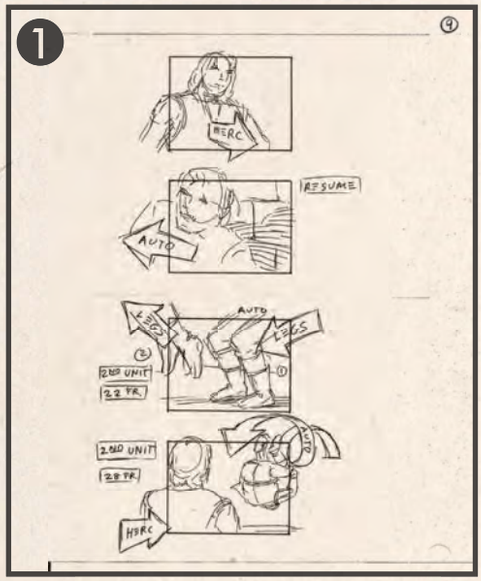
Strife (Joel Tobeck)
Pesky deity and trickster, going back to Herc's younger days.

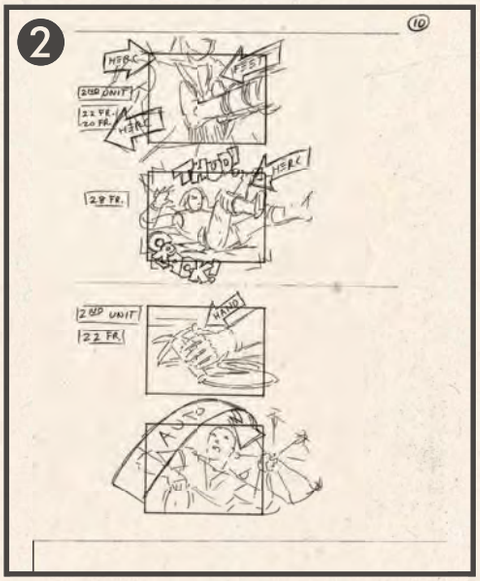
Jason (Jeffrey Thomas, Chris Conrad)
Old friend from the Argonauts, now married to Alcmene.

Ares (Kevin Smith)
God of War and Herc's half brother.

Serena (Sam Sorbo)
AKA the Golden Hind, used by Ares in a plot to kill Hercules.

Alcmene (Elizabeth Hawthorne, Liddy Holloway)
Herc's long-suffering mum.

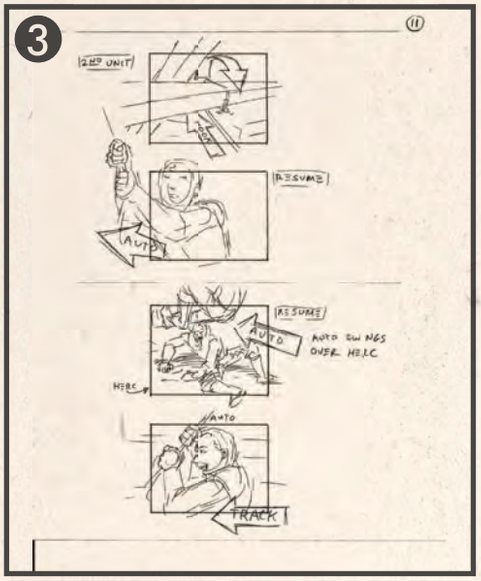


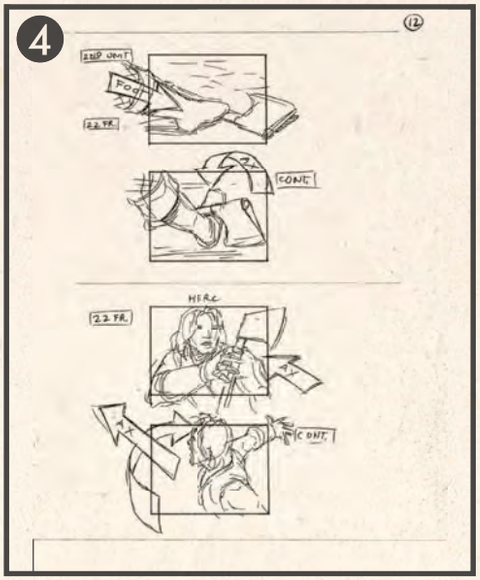


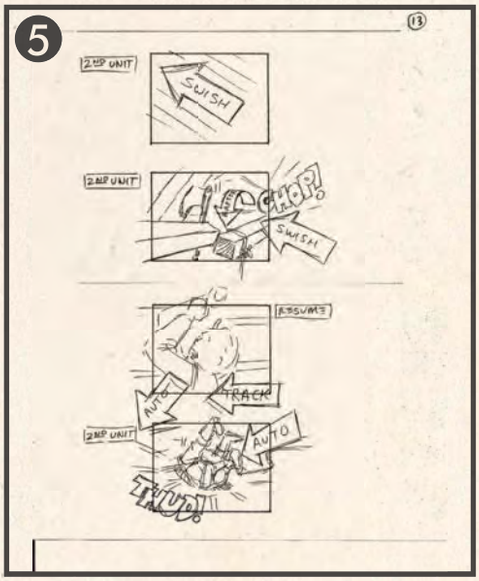
STORYBOARDS

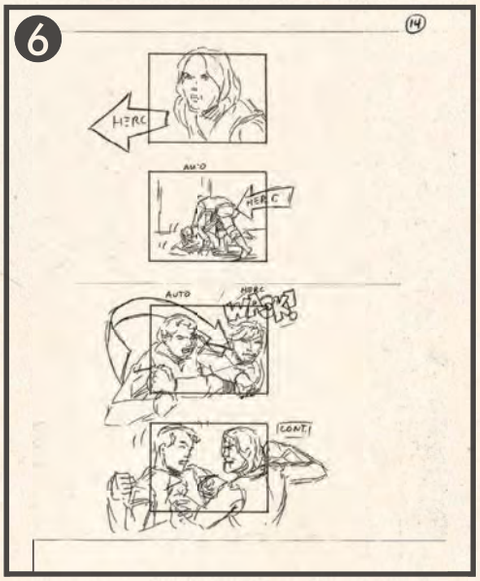
Director Doug Lefler lays out a key action sequence…

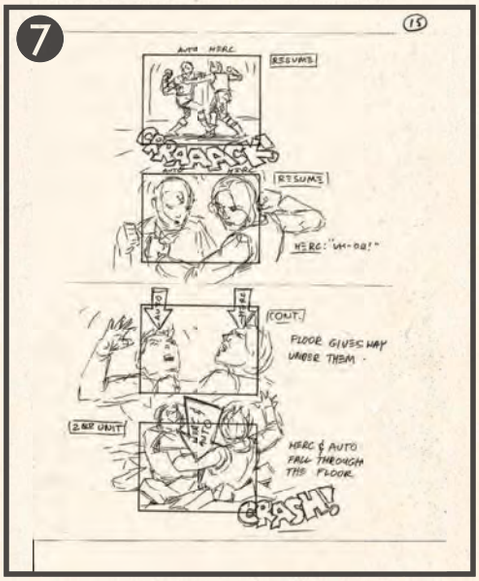
One of the earliest contributors to *Hercules* was Doug Lefler, a storyboard artist and second unit director on the early TV movies, who went on to direct a number of episodes. Lefler frequently storyboarded not just the action sequences, but pretty much every shot for his episodes. Here's a pivotal sequence from Season Two's 'The King Of Thieves'…











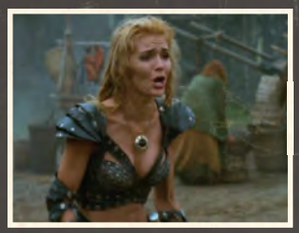
COMPLETE GUIDE TO HERCULES

The trademark action sequences were partly based on the Italian strongman movies of the Fifties.

Sorbo breaks out his best sword moves in 'Les Contemptibles'.

Renee O'Connor, who played Gabrielle in *Xena*, originally appeared as Deianira.

THE TEN BEST HERCULES EPISODES



1. ARMAGEDDON NOW

Hope frees Callisto, sending her back to stop Hercules from being born, while Ares sends Iolaus to stop her.

2. THE WARRIOR PRINCESS

Iolaus is seduced by the evil Xena, using him as a pawn to destroy Hercules.

3. YES VIRGINIA, THERE IS A HERCULES

A 'clip' show taking place in modern-day LA, the writers of *Hercules* panic when actor Kevin Sorbo goes missing.

4. UNCHAINED HEART

Hercules and Iolaus team up with a reformed Xena to defeat Darphus and Ares' monstrous dog, Graegus.

5. STRANGER IN A STRANGE WORLD

Iolaus is exchanged with his other-dimensional double and falls afoul of Herc's evil twin, The Sovereign.

"THE KEVIN SORBO SITUATION HAD A LONG-LASTING EFFECT"

ROB TAPERT

***Hercules* originally began as a series of TV movies, including *Hercules And The Lost Kingdom*.**

Tapert. "But having seen looked at *Bride With White Hair* and some of the Hong Kong movies, I said, 'That's the key: make them really tough, mean and slightly dysfunctional.

"At that time, [writer] John Schulian came to us with a story and said, 'I want to do Hercules, Iolaus and the woman who comes between them!' I said, 'That's a really good idea, and I want to do a three-episode 'Warrior Princess' story; can you make this woman a warrior princess type?' That would allow us to incorporate a bunch of that weird, Hong Kong-style action that we really hadn't been able to get into *Hercules* before.

"Through weird fates, we had actually cast somebody else in the role of Xena, but she fell out the day before she was due to fly on 30 December. We had just used Lucy [Lawless] in the centaur episode, so the studio said, 'You can't use her!' I made a couple of offers to other actresses, but nobody wanted to get on a plane on 30 December to fly to New Zealand for a first-run syndicated show, so we said, 'You know, Lucy can do a good American accent; let's try her and see what happens!' and lo and behold, it stuck."

With the series now well established, it was time to populate the *Hercules* universe. The first episode of Season Two introduced Bruce Campbell as Autolycus, the king of thieves. There was the monstrous Echidna (Bridget Hoffman) and her future husband, the good-hearted giant Typhon (Glenn Shadix). Aphrodite (Alexandra Tydings) added comic relief, as did Salmoneus (Robert Trebor), a character introduced in Season One. "Highlight-wise," notes Tapert, "'The King Of Thieves', which led off the season with Autolycus, was one of my favourites. There was 'The Apple', which I enjoyed, 'The Enforcer', and the Echidna episode, 'The Mother Of All Monsters', which we continued the following season. I like a lot of what we did.

"Some of the things I didn't like was that we got a little too goofy sometimes, but we actually did one of my favourite episodes of *Hercules* that season, which was 'The Other Side'. I like those darker, moral-dilemma episodes."

Season Three continued to expand on that mythology, with episodes like 'Not Fade Away' following on from 'The Enforcer', and 'Monster Child In The Promised Land' bringing back Echidna and Typhon. And there was the three-part 'Golden Hind' trilogy, in which Sorbo's future wife, Sam Jenkins played Hercules' fictional love interest. "I really like those three episodes we did with Herc and the Golden Hind," claims Tapert, "where he meets this woman and falls in love.

"I also liked 'Mercenary', the season-opener that Michael Hurst directed, which was a darker episode. I liked a bunch of the episodes we did that were lighter and had monsters in them, which was something I was going to change the following year. I was planning to do some darker episodes that season. We discovered that *Xena* had surpassed *Hercules* in the ratings; not that *Herc* slid, but *Xena* grew even more, so I think one was a hit, and the other a phenomenon, so I had to do everything I could do help keep *Herc* a phenomenon. It was just a matter of finding ways to do that."

As it turned out, most of the plans for Season Four had to be abandoned when Sorbo suffered a crippling aneurysm in an artery near his shoulder. The condition had been producing blood clots for a while, and the actor later revealed that he had been suffering a series of small strokes for some time, which he had kept secret. The resulting surgical procedure took nearly two years to fully recover from.

"The Kevin Sorbo situation had a far longer-lasting effect," Tapert confirms, "meaning he was not able to work, and it was hard to keep him the star of the show. He didn't want to talk about it or publicise it in any way, shape or form, because he thought it would affect his ability to get features. We ended up doing episodes like 'Porkules' and 'One Fowl Day', because we had to say, 'Okay, we've got Kevin for two hours on set!' so we were all scrambling early on to try and cover."

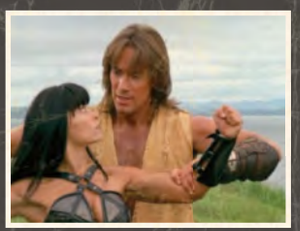
"Everything we planned had to go right out the window once Kevin got sick," continues writer/producer Alex Kurtzman. "The episode 'Faith' was going to be right in the middle of that season, but that turned out to be a blessing in disguise, because I think the fifth season was the better for it."

6. THE APPLE

Aphrodite gives Iolaus a golden apple that makes every woman he meets fall in love with him – with predictably disastrous results.

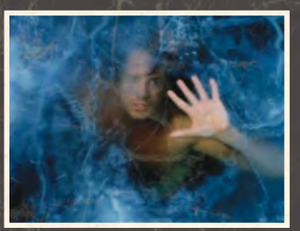
7. THE KING OF THIEVES

When Iolaus is sentenced to death, Hercules has to track down the real culprit and bring him to justice.



8. THE ENFORCER

Hera sends a Terminator-like assassin (played by Hong Kong martial arts veteran Karen Sheperd) to kill Hercules.



9. RESURRECTION

Trying to cope with Iolaus' death, Herc is shipwrecked in Ireland, where druids believe he is the 'Chosen One,' sent to battle the evil Morrigan.

10. MERCENARY

An injured Hercules is marooned on a desert island, where he has to battle pirates, flesh-eating sand monsters and his own escaped prisoner.

"XENA HAD SURPASSED HERCULES IN THE RATINGS"

ROB TAPERT

"Kevin was totally out of commission for several shows," adds Kurtzman's long-time writing partner, Roberto Orci, "and even after that, he could only work four hours a day, slowly building up. It's amazing that the show kept going. If you saw the 'Yes Virginia' episode, that was partly accurate, because it was sort of an amalgamation of all our meetings on how we could possibly do shows without Kevin."

The episode Orci alludes to is 'Yes Virginia, There Is A Hercules', one of the show's infamous 'clip' shows, but this time with the show's cast members playing their real-life counterparts. "That was Rob's idea," Kurtzman insists. "I thought that would have been too insane an idea, but Rob is responsible for some of the more insane ideas that happened on the show – but in a really good way. He was the one who said, 'Why don't we do a show that-' and Bob and I kind of looked at each other like, 'Is he serious?' but he definitely was."

Bruce Campbell, a long-time Raimi/Tapert collaborator, was cast as Autolycus, the self-proclaimed king of thieves.

Were the TV versions true to their real-life counterparts? "Absolutely!" declares Kurtzman. "Rob is a big fisherman, Paul [Coyle] is a huge gambler, and Liz [Friedman] was boxing at the time. We were sleeping in our offices, but for all intents and purposes, we *were* sleeping in our offices, because we wrote something like 12 of the 22 episodes that year.

"I was the new guy, so I hardly talked," Orci interjects. "And Jerry [Patrick Brown] was going down to the gun club frequently for recreation," finishes Kurtzman, "so they were all based on reality."

With Sorbo back for Season Five, it was time to send Hercules around the world. That included destinations such as Sumeria ('Faith', 'Descent'), Ireland ('Resurrection', 'Render Unto Caesar'), Norway ('Norse By Norsevest', 'Somewhere Over The Rainbow Bridge') and Britannia ('Once Upon A Future King'). Herc even made a return trip to the alternate universe in 'Stranger And Stranger.'

As it turned out, the fifth season of *Hercules* would also be its last full 24-episode order. Rumours began to trickle out that Sorbo was tired of doing the series, and a post-mortem interview with the actor suggests that might be somewhat true. In an October 2007 conversation with *The Sci Fi World.Net*, Sorbo claims "They offered me a three-year extension on my contract, but I was actually at a burn-out phase.

"I said. 'Look, we've already done this now for five seasons, and I'm ready to go on to something else.' [They said] 'Well, fine, let's do eight hours and call it quits.' I think they rushed the ending, and they shouldn't have. We easily could have finished out the full 22 episodes, but ultimately, I think their childishness hurt themselves and the fans. It's too bad and unfortunate. It's something I will always regret, and wish we could have finished out."

Unlike previous seasons that often featured arc-heavy storylines, the final eight episodes of Season Six were much more standalone in nature. "We had played out the 'twilight of the gods' in *Xena*," Tapert elaborates. "Once upon a time, that was meant to be a storyline that carried over between both *Herc* and *Xena* as they both made it to the end of the season. That was my original gameplan, but with *Herc* going away, we played it out in a more abbreviated fashion in *Xena*."

But despite its abrupt ending, there can be no doubt about the impact that *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* made on the action television genre. "I'm very proud of what we were able to accomplish on my time at *Hercules*," reflects Schulian.

"It's very rare that you can be part of something that is truly a cultural phenomenon," he adds. "It's a very special thing, and all of us who were involved in some significant way had a hand in something that was very special, that could just as easily been a joke."

"I think the sword-and-sandals genre was basically revitalised a little bit," adds Tapert, who went on to explore similar (if more adult) territory in the cable drama *Spartacus* a decade or so later. "And to be totally vainglorious, I don't know that they ever would have made *Gladiator* if *Herc* and *Xena* hadn't shown there was life back in that genre!"

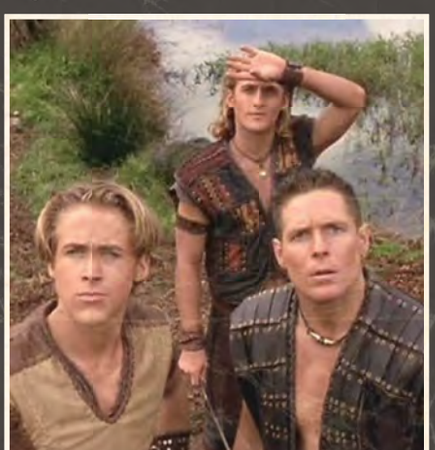
Hercules: The Legendary Journeys (Complete Series 1-6) is available to buy on DVD now.

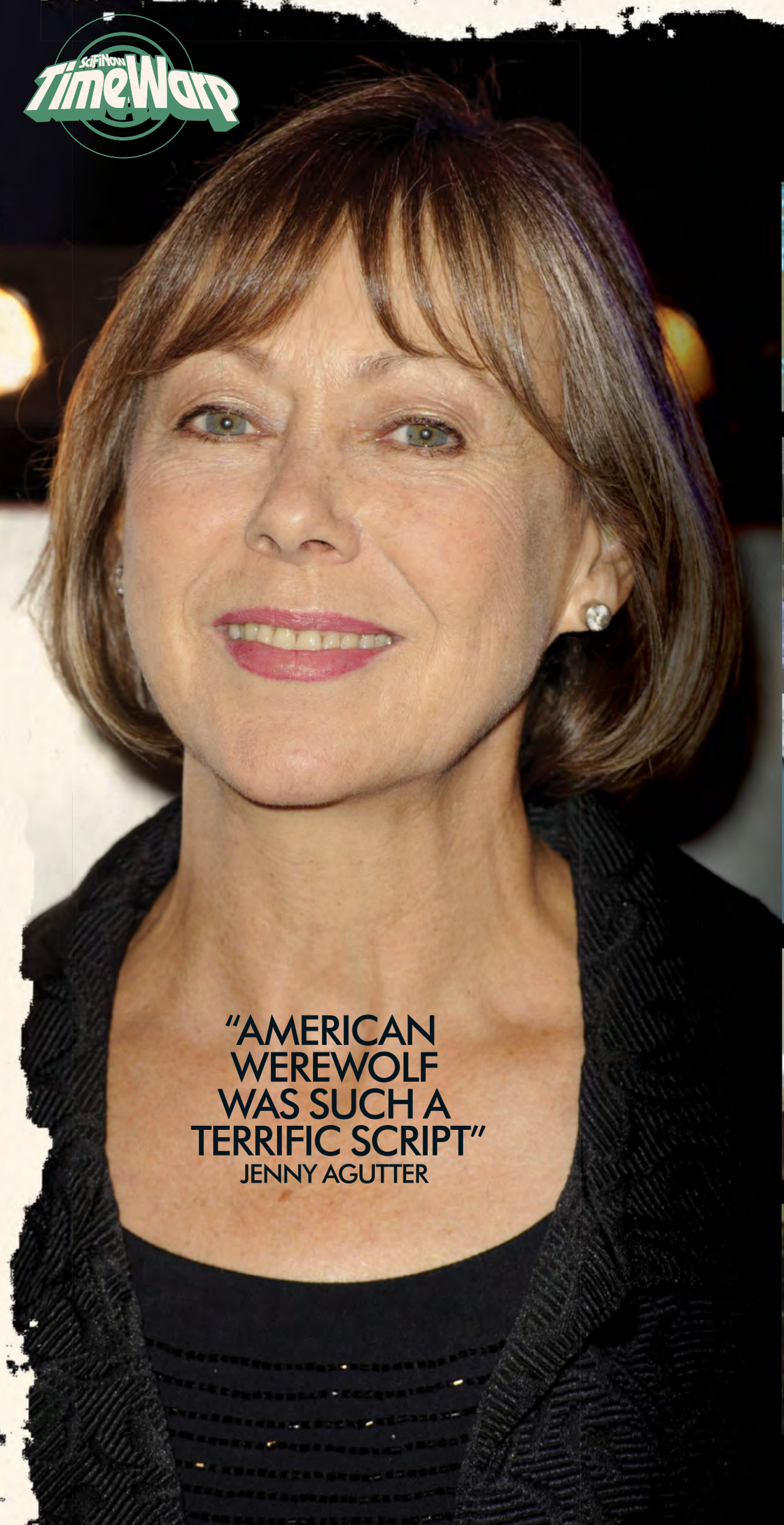
YOUNG HERCULES

Tapert on the adventures of our young strapping hero

A short-lived spin-off series, *Young Hercules* featured Ryan Gosling (yes, that Ryan Gosling, although *Teen Wolf*'s Ian Bohen played the character in the parent series) as a teenage Hercules attending Cheiron's Academy for young warriors, along with Jason (Chris Conrad) and Iolaus (Dean O'Gorman). Also appearing were *Hercules* mainstays Kevin Smith as Ares, Joel Tobeck playing Strife and Meighan Desmond as Discord.

Shot in New Zealand with members of the *Hercules* and *Xena* production team, *Young Hercules* lasted for a single 50-episode season. "We originally shot a 90-minute direct-to-video pilot," recalls Tapert, "which turned out really well, and we were able to move it into an afternoon series. It was actually darker than the original *Hercules* – we like those dark stories!"





"AMERICAN WEREWOLF WAS SUCH A TERRIFIC SCRIPT"
JENNY AGUTTER

INTERVIEW

JENNY AGUTTER

WE TALK TO THE GREAT JENNY AGUTTER ABOUT LOGAN'S RUN, AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON AND WHY SHE LOVES HER ROLE IN THE MARVEL UNIVERSE

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

A couple of minutes before we're scheduled to talk to Jenny Agutter, the fire alarm goes off. Rather than dropping everything, we spend a potentially crucial few seconds firing off an email to the actor informing her of the situation. This response is indicative of how important her work has been to us over the years: *Logan's Run, Walkabout, An American Werewolf In London*, and now the Marvel movie universe. One false fire alarm later, and we're talking to Agutter about why she's auctioning off her *Logan's Run* original screenplay, and why her work has left such an impression on legions of fans.

Why did you decide on the *Logan's Run* script as the perfect item for your charity?

The auction is called 65 Roses, and it's for Cystic Fibrosis. Cystic Fibrosis is a disease that affects the lungs and the pancreas mainly. The lungs become very badly infected, and they can't throw off infections. 90 per cent of those people with cystic fibrosis die with heart disease. If they're lucky enough to get a transplant it gives them a chance for living a full and healthy life. But it's an exciting time, because there's so much research, so much new medication, so the *Logan's Run* script with life finishing at 30, there was a point in time where the median age of someone with CF was 30. That's been moved along all the time, I have a niece who has CF, when she was born the median age was eight, when she got to 18 it was 30, she's now 38. *Logan's Run* was about people fighting to be able to live longer, and here is a condition that is all about trying to live a full life. Then it's also a terrific film to have done. I had a huge amount of fun doing it. There were really lovely people on it, Michael Anderson who directed, Saul David who produced it. They've talked again and again about making a new film of it. I could always end up at some point in the Peter Ustinov part! They needn't be sexist any longer; it could be a woman in the building!

The central idea of *Logan's Run* does seem to have not dated....

It's funny, because you say not dated, but when you look at it and you think that six months or so later after that film came out, *Star Wars* was made, the whole look and feeling of it was completely different. *Logan's Run* has a classic, almost old movie style to it. I felt really that I was at the tail end of the Hollywood era, the make-up people had done all the make-up for the Forties stars, so I would get all the Hollywood gossip from them. I do remember also filming one entire week at the Los Angeles Sewage Plant, which wasn't much fun! I spent a week running down corridors being wet down in that little green outfit, soaked each day, and just would run shouting "Help!" and "No!" and "Logan!" And that was my script for the week. But it was really good fun to do. Michael Anderson kept saying, "These are all toys, it's fun!" And it was.

What was lovely about doing Joss Whedon's *Avengers Assemble* was he asked me to do it, and I went out, it was right at the beginning of filming, and it just brought back that whole thing. Huge sets on large soundstages, lots of people running around making things happen, and special effects and all the rest of it. I said, "Are you enjoying this?" he said "Yep, this is really good fun!" and it reminded me entirely of Michael. Joss Whedon did say at the end of it that it was really hard work – he forgot halfway through about the enjoyment!

***An American Werewolf In London* is another one that's still adored.**

I think that's also because it was a kind of a first. I met John and Deborah Landis when I first went to America, well before we made the film. He said he had written a script when he had been in Yugoslavia and working as a runner, and had been so taken with the fact that people had been that superstitious and had crosses on the side of the road, they still believed in werewolves and vampires. So he came up with the idea of the werewolf in London and found the English culture quite funny!

And the lovely thing about doing that film for me was that it was such a terrific script, the characters were very well formed. There are many horror movies where, particularly in that period of time, as a young woman you would end up running and screaming, and that's all that's required. In this case it happened to be a really wonderful, rounded character who's this nurse who falls in love with a guy who turns out to be a werewolf. I think there's an awful lot of young women who've kind of been there. Not quite the werewolf, but the person wasn't quite what they expected! And Landis has a way of working that is very high-energy. You're never really off the set, he likes people to be there, and you feel part of a team. He shoots really quite fast, he will actually not stop and retake something, but continue and just say, "Do that again." It's really hard for the continuity people, but he just wants to get something very immediate, and I think he captures that. He's very good as an actor to work with.

Jenny Agutter as Nurse Alex Price in *An American Werewolf In London*.

Are you surprised by the number of films that you've done that have become classics?

I think always when you're making a film it help you to believe that maybe it will do well. Sometimes you can have a great time, and there are all sorts of things that go wrong and it just doesn't make it as a film, or doesn't appeal to the audiences. It's hard to tell what it is that works and why things go on and have their life afterwards.

Science fiction is such a particular genre. When something becomes a cult with science fiction it just remains forever. I'm constantly coming up against people with little green outfits and sending pictures of the crystals and stuff. It stays in people's imagination, if they're sci-fi fans particularly. I think because they enter the imagination in a particular way. It's not just a story, it's actually another world.

Learn more about the 65 Roses charity at **www.cff.org**.

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AFTER A DISASTROUS REACTION UPON ITS RELEASE IN 1992, DAVID LYNCH'S TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME HAS GRADUALLY BEEN RE-EVALUATED AS ONE OF HIS MOST POWERFUL FILMS. JOIN US AS WE REVISIT THE LAST DAYS OF LAURA PALMER…

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

TimeWarp Retro Classic Film

TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME

Film

RUNNING TIME: 135 minutes
RELEASE DATE: 28 August 1992
DIRECTOR: David Lynch
WRITERS: David Lynch, Robert Engels
CAST: Sheryl Lee, Ray Wise, Kyle MacLachlan, Chris Isaak, Keifer Sutherland, Moira Kelly

About

An FBI investigation into the death of waitress Teresa Banks ends with the disappearance of Agent Chester Desmond (Chris Isaak), and Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) is convinced that the killer will strike again. One year later, in the small town of Twin Peaks, Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) has begun the final days of her life. There's a darkness to Laura that her friends don't see, and there's a terrible secret at home that she's not even sure she knows about. As she drifts slowly but surely towards her own doom, the terrible truth will be revealed…

As evidenced by its disastrous premiere at Cannes Film Festival in 1992, *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* is a hard film to like. If you fell in love with the quaint little town of Twin Peaks, with its big characters and bigger secrets, *Fire Walk With Me* comes as something of a shock.

The TV series, created by David Lynch and Mark Frost, generally kept the darkness bubbling away underneath the surface, only occasionally reminding us that there was something horrible lurking in this soap-opera small town. When things got truly upsetting, *Twin Peaks* offered the reassurance of Cooper's pearls of wisdom, the comfort food of the Double R Diner, Deputy Andy's pratfalls and good old-fashioned melodrama. There was a balance.

There's very little by way of sugar in the dark, cold, bitter cup of coffee that is *Fire Walk With Me*, however. After the opening half-hour prologue, we bear witness to the final days of Laura Palmer and the darkness of the world she lived in before her murder. There's no place for the charming local law enforcement here, no cherry pie. Several of the established characters that do appear, like Peggy Lipton's Norma, are on screen for less than a minute. Instead, we're shown the sordid parties that were only referred to in whispers in the series, we get to see the monstrous Jacques (Walter Olkewicz) in his natural environment, and we cower from the terrible truth of Leland Palmer (Ray Wise).

However, what could be seen as a slap in the face for fans of the show is, in fact, the reason why the film is so powerful. It's a beautifully atmospheric and tremendously potent journey, an examination of a tortured soul that exposes the horrifying catalyst for the central mystery of the show. We were always given some distance in the TV series when it came to the details of Laura Palmer's death, if only due to the fact that the secrets, lies and rumours were being related by other characters. Here, we're not given any such comfort. *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* is a horror film. A beautifully shot, haunting, tragic nightmare about incest and abuse still rooted in the world (slightly removed from our own) that Lynch had created.

Kyle MacLachlan returns as Dale Cooper.

But let's start at the beginning; with the film's half-hour opening that introduces some of the *Twin Peaks* world's finest characters. With a waitress murdered, Chief Gordon Cole (Lynch) calls for Special Agent Chester Desmond. Played with deadpan excellence by Chris Isaak, we're introduced to Chet in a literal field, part of a law enforcement team arresting two women and a man by a school bus filled with screaming children. Gordon teams Chet with the bookish Agent Sam Stanley (an endearingly awkward performance from Kiefer Sutherland), and gives them some cryptic clues courtesy of Lil (Kimberly Ann Cole), a dancing woman in a red dress and matching wig, introduced by Gordon as "My mother's sister's girl." Stanley's clueless, but Chet quickly deconstructs the meaning behind her sour face, odd moves and the blue rose she's sporting (the blue rose, however, is not for Sam to know about). This sequence feels like textbook Lynch, and classic *Twin Peaks*.

Deer Meadow, on the other hand, is the polar opposite of Twin Peaks. The murdered girl lived in a trailer park run by Harry Dean Stanton's curmudgeonly Carl, who makes terrible coffee. The waitress at the poorly lit local diner is surly, and

Chris Isaak and Keifer Sutherland cameo.

Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) masks her pain.

Ray Wise is terrifying and affecting as Leland.

CLASSIC QUOTES

"HE SAYS HE WANTS TO BE ME, OR HE'LL KILL ME"
LAURA PALMER

"IF I HAD A NICKEL FOR EVERY CIGARETTE YOUR MOM SMOKED, I'D BE DEAD"
DONNA HAYWARD

"MY NAME IS ANNIE. I'VE BEEN WITH DALE AND LAURA. THE GOOD DALE IS IN THE LODGE AND CAN'T LEAVE. WRITE IT IN YOUR DIARY"
ANNIE BLACKBURN

"WHEN THIS KIND OF FIRE STARTS, IT IS VERY HARD TO PUT OUT. THE TENDER BOUGHS OF INNOCENCE BURN FIRST, AND THE WIND RISES, AND THEN ALL GOODNESS IS IN JEOPARDY"
THE LOG LADY

"HEY, SLOW POKES… GUESS WHAT? THERE'S NO TOMORROW… KNOW WHY, BABY? 'CAUSE IT'LL NEVER GET HERE"
JACQUES RENAULT

"IT WAS A DREAM! WE LIVE INSIDE A DREAM!"
JEFFRIES

"WELL NOW, I'M NOT GONNA TALK ABOUT JUDY. IN FACT, WE'RE NOT GONNA TALK ABOUT JUDY AT ALL, WE'RE GONNA KEEP HER OUT OF IT"
JEFFRIES

"GODDAMN, THESE PEOPLE ARE CONFUSING"
CARL

"I WAS WORRIED ABOUT TODAY BECAUSE OF THE DREAM I TOLD YOU ABOUT"
DALE COOPER

"THE ANGELS WOULDN'T HELP YOU. BECAUSE THEY'VE ALL GONE AWAY"
LAURA PALMER

"LAURA PALMER IS GIVEN SOME MEASURE OF RELIEF IN THE WORLD BEYOND"

Laura prepares for a dark night of the soul.

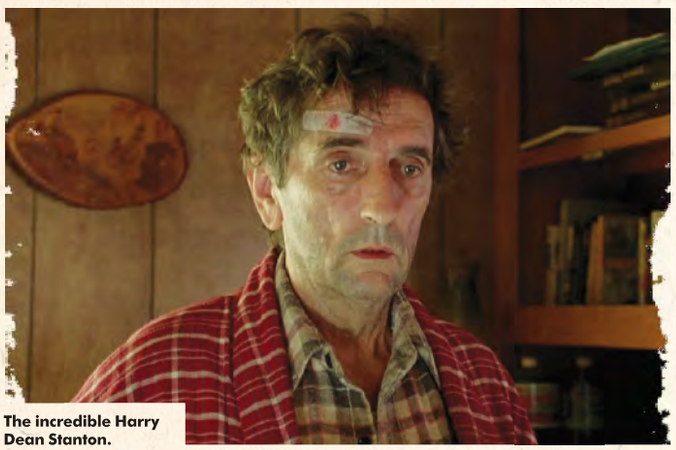
Another Place is more threatening than ever.

the local cops are actively aggressive, but no match for Chet, who makes the words "We've got our own clock," hard-boiled gold. The cold autopsy scene hammers home that whatever happened was grim, seedy and brutal. The town eventually proves to be too much even for the ice-cool Chet, who vanishes after reaching under the trailer for a mysterious ring.

Then there's David Bowie's Agent Philip Jeffries, who reappears suddenly after being missing for years, on the day that Cooper tells Gordon he was worried about because of the dream he had. As Bowie rambles in a Southern accent, we realise that Jeffries got a glimpse behind the curtain "above a convenience store", with previously unseen characters from Another Place (including, for some reason, Jürgen Prochnow with a huge beard). It's an unsettling scene that walks the fine line between ridiculous and brilliant, and after Cooper realises that they're dealing with someone who will kill again, and pays an ominous visit to Deer Meadow, we're taken to Laura.

One of the biggest criticisms of the film was that if you watched the show, you know who killed Laura Palmer, but our foreknowledge is part of the film's dreadful impact. "BOB is real!" Laura tells her housebound, diary-hiding confidante Harold. "He's been having me since I was 12. And the diary was hidden too well. There is no other person who could have known where it was. He comes in through my window at night. He's real. He's getting to know me now. He speaks to me… He says he wants to be me, or he'll kill me."

The most terrifying sequence in the film follows soon after, when the Other Place's Mrs Tremond (Frances Bay) and her masked grandson encounter Laura on her way to deliver meals on wheels. "The man behind the mask is looking for the book with the pages torn out. He is going towards the hiding place. He is under the fan now." Laura races home, and we're treated to one the best examples of Lynch transforming a safe space into a nightmare, as Laura searches the house before entering her room, and BOB emerges from behind the dresser, his scream matching her own. Laura flees and



The incredible Harry Dean Stanton.

The final moments of Laura Palmer.

LYNCH'S FAVES

5 of our favourite recurring David Lynch actors

KYLE MACLACHLAN

1 MacLachlan was Lynch's leading man in *Dune*, before delivering a career-making performance in *Blue Velvet*, but he'll always be Dale Cooper to us.

GRACE ZABRISKIE

2 Zabriskie was Laura Palmer's quavering mother in *Twin Peaks*, but delivered terrifying intensity in *Wild At Heart* and *Inland Empire*.

HARRY DEAN STANTON

3 He cameos in *Fire Walk With Me*, *The Straight Story* and *Inland Empire*, and we love his doomed PI Johnnie Farragut in *Wild At Heart*.

hides down the street as her father Leland emerges from the house, and now she knows the truth.

As terrifying as BOB is as an apparition, it's his possession of Leland, and the things he makes him do, that are the true horror of *Fire Walk With Me*. The film leaves us inside the Palmer household, horribly aware of what's been happening and what's to come. A scene at the dinner table is unbearably tense as Leland grabs her daughter's hand to see how dirty her nails are (under the nails, as we've already been told, is where the killer hides a piece of paper). "Stop it, she doesn't like it," pleads Laura's mother Sarah (the incomparable Grace Zabriskie). "How do you know what she likes?" hisses Leland. Wise's performance is absolutely stunning, seamlessly switching between terrifying monster and man on the verge of a nervous breakdown. The sequence in which he's confronted by a raging Mike (Al Strobel) at the traffic lights is so fraught as to be almost unwatchable.

Agent Chester Desmond has no time for idiots.

Mike and the mysterious ring.

The swirling elements of Laura's living nightmare are shocking, but compelling. "When this kind of fire starts, it is very hard to put out," the Log Lady (the late Catherine E Coulson) tells Laura outside The Big Bang Bar. "The tender boughs of innocence burn first, and the wind rises, and then all goodness is in jeopardy." This warning, combined with the ethereal sounds of Julee Cruise, brings Laura to tears, before she embarks on the next stage of her journey. The prolonged sequence at the Pink Room, where we watch Laura, Donna (Moira Kelly) and Ronette (Phoebe Augustine) get seedy with men who "want to fuck the prom queen," is hard to watch, not just because the music is so loud that the characters are subtitled, but because this is the side of Twin Peaks that the show only hinted at. It's nothing compared to Laura's murder itself, as a manic Leland takes a tied, bound and screaming Laura and Ronette from Jacques' cabin and to a train car, where she realises that BOB wants her. When he's denied, BOB drives Leland to kill her.

But for all the confrontational horrors, *Fire Walk With Me* is still a David Lynch film, and the Black Lodge is just as fascinating and foreboding as ever. As nightmarish as her end is, Laura Palmer is given some measure of relief in the world beyond. The angel that releases Ronette from her bonds is present in the Red Room, as Cooper places his hand on her shoulder, and Laura cries and laughs. Her nightmare is over, and the audience can stumble out of the cinema, bruised, shaken and in no doubt that they've been through something powerful.

WATCH FIRST

LAURA (1944)
Otto Preminger's noir about a detective falling in love with the girl whose murder he's investigating was a big influence on the show.

WATCH NEXT

THE DOOM GENERATION (1995)
Gregg Araki owes a big debt to Laura Palmer's excesses in this sexy, mad movie.

YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW

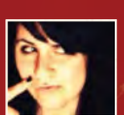
"Truly terrible! We had to give refunds at the cinema I worked at when this came out. Closed after just 3 days!!" **@HokusBloke**

"Lynch's misunderstood masterpiece!! One of my top five movies!" **@casinochris79**

"A masterpiece to close it all…so why a sequel?" **@ChasingMobyDick**

"Love it-beautiful story that has a mood all its own. The final thirty mins are terrifying. Having seen the deleted scenes I have a new found respect for the theatrical release." **@neil_bomb**

"Watched it multiple times but ask me what it's about and I've no clue. Seems like a misstep, but is it? With Lynch you never know." **@weirdlybearded**



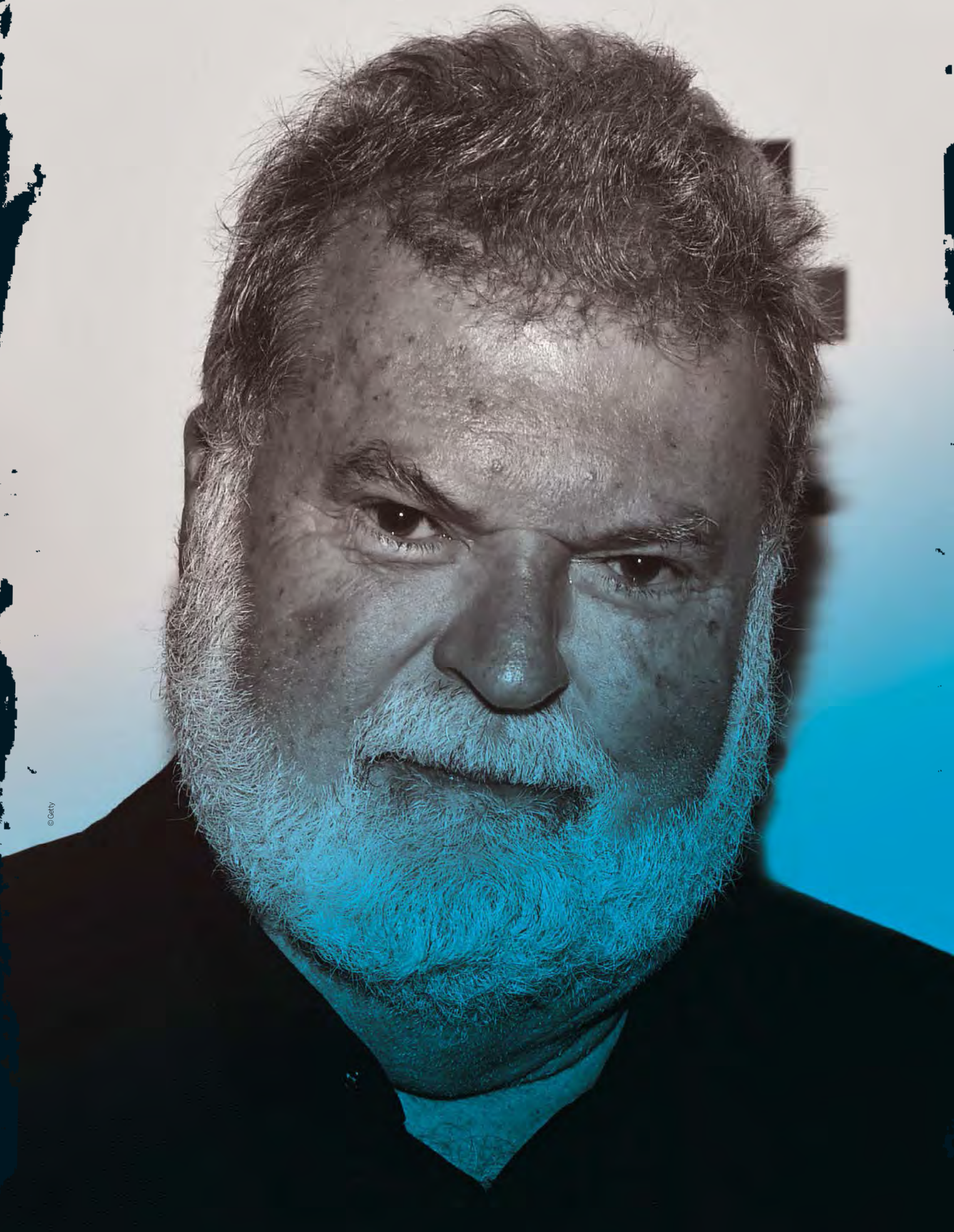
"It scared me. A lot. It's not my fave film of his, but I appreciate what he was trying to do with it. There's more story to tell!" **@moonrisesister**

JACK NANCE

4 Pete Martell on *Twin Peaks*, Nance was the original Lynch hero in *Eraserhead*, and was in nearly all his films until his death in 1996.

LAURA DERN

5 She was the girl next door in *Blue Velvet*, the hotter than Georgia asphalt Lula in *Wild At Heart*, and she was absolutely stunning in *Inland Empire*.



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INTERVIEW

MAN BEHIND THE LENS
DEAN CUNDEY

THE UNSUNG HERO BEHIND THE LIKES OF HALLOWEEN, THE THING, BACK TO THE FUTURE AND MORE, CINEMATOGRAPHER DEAN CUNDEY HAS SPENT A LIFETIME MAKING EXCELLENT FILMS EVEN BETTER. WE SPOKE TO HIM ABOUT HIS CAREER AND EXPERIENCES…

WORDS **OLIVER PFEIFFER**

He has been responsible for lensing some of the most iconic films of all time, working with legendary filmmakers like Steven Spielberg, John Carpenter and Robert Zemeckis to bring to life classics like *Halloween*, *Back To The Future*, and *Jurassic Park*, among others. We speak to acclaimed cinematographer Dean Cundey about some of the secrets behind his incredible craft and how he's now passing on his expertise to budding filmmakers…

You started your career with *Creature From Black Lake*, a Bigfoot-type horror. Was this very much guerilla filmmaking?
It was one of my earliest, and it was quite fun… it was the first where I went to a distant location – Louisiana. Most of the low-budget concept stuff is done in Los Angeles, and the production was interesting because it was a suspense-horror film with a creature and a couple of guys who were camping. So I guess you might say it was one of my first forays into low-budget horror.

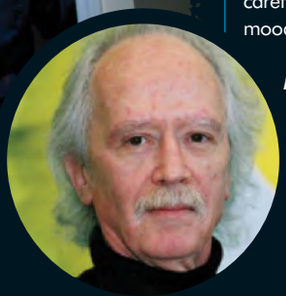
***Halloween* later changed your career forever. When did you realise there was something special about John Carpenter?**
Pretty early on. Before *Halloween*, the directors I worked with only had the idea that the camera was used to record actors talking, then something would blow up! John was the first who put real thought into the visuals of the storytelling and wanted to use the camera to tell the story. That was definitely what I was interested in, so it became a great collaboration.

Your use of the corners of the frame to suggest a sinister something lurking in the shadows was very effective. How was that planned?
We chose the aspect ratio very specifically because we wanted there to be space in the frame where evil could be lurking at any moment. Sometimes there's nothing there, just darkness – where you're teasing the audience and cranking up the suspense. Over time of course, something did appear in that space. It was a very conscious effort, and also a great learning tool, because when we realised how effective it was, it became a style throughout our films together.

Carpenter once said he didn't think the original cut of *The Fog* was scary enough…
It was certainly an interesting lesson for us, and it's one I pass on. The threat of death for your characters is a crucial element in creating the suspense and the terror. When we did *The Fog*, John ran the film for a test audience, and it became evident that the audience really needed to see dire consequences for the characters that we care about. It was a great lesson for me, and I've passed it on to directors: you have to ensure that your stakes are really high for your people.

> "ALL OF THE SCARES IN HALLOWEEN ARE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND IMPLIED – THERE IS NO BLOOD"
> DEAN CUNDEY

John Carpenter's Halloween was a masterclass in inventive use of cinematography.



Then came *The Thing*, which had a legendary shoot. What was your approach to this film?
We realised that it wasn't so much about 'things' leaping out, but about the suspicion and paranoia of who could possibly be the alien. Again, it was really a good exercise for creating suspense visually. For *Halloween*, all of the scares are psychological and implied – there was absolutely no use of blood. *The Thing* was the same way in that it wasn't something that leaped out and bit your head off! It was a very insidious kind of a threat. It created a need to tell the story in a more suspenseful and subdued way.

When you were planning the shoot for *Psycho 2*, did you go back and re-watch Alfred Hitchcock's original to try and emulate his style?
Yes, very much. The director Richard Franklin was a great Hitchcock fan, and so he was extremely delighted with the opportunity to do the sequel to *Psycho*. Our effort was to ensure it looked like it continued on, with the only difference being that it was in colour. We very carefully analysed the shots, the compositions, the mood and the style of Hitchcock.

***Back To The Future* was one of your first major blockbusters. How did you try to replicate the Fifties aesthetically for that part of the film?**
Well, I grew up in the Fifties, therefore I

INTERVIEW
DEAN CUNDEY

approached the period with an understanding of it. It was probably one of the last really nice, wholesome periods of us history. The idea was to make it look very pleasant, so we used Fifties colours. I also made it a little bit warm overall, so that there was a contrast between the present, from where Marty came, to the Fifties – which was a warm, friendly kind of visit.

How did this contrast with work on the sequels; with *Part II* in a very futuristic 2015, and *Part III* being a western setting?
Robert Zemeckis is also a great visual storyteller. The time-travel elements gave me the opportunity to create a different feeling for each of the periods. With *Part II*, when they go into the future and discover Biff has manipulated everything it was a colder, darker feeling. And in *Part III* where we go back to the old west it was fun, because we were recreating the approach of the western film and how we perceive it according to other westerns. Marty and Doc could go there and give us a perspective where we weren't really just in the west, but there was a wink to what we perceive the west to be based on films that we have seen. It was fun doing that, because we were approaching a western with modern sensibilities. It was an interesting hybrid.

You reunited with Zemeckis on *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* Being live action spliced with animation, what challenges did this pose?
It's still one of my favourite projects. When I was young I was fascinated with Disney animation, and I learned quite a bit about the culture of animation, so when I was given the chance to do that with live action I was delighted. *Roger* was ground-breaking because we took a giant leap into the interactive ability of animation, to live in a live-action world and carefully create the illusion that these characters lived in the real world, as opposed to being a novelty in it. It was a very labour-intensive shoot – taking the interactive and the animation style to the next step from what had been done previously.

***Death Becomes Her* was another Zemeckis collaboration. It has a very old-school, almost film noir feel to it. Was this something you were consciously striving for?**
Yes, I think so. The story itself was bizarrely dark, and so we decided the mood should be very noirish and a little bit stylised, because you've got to believe these women are going to live forever and that their heads can go on backwards. We deliberately looked for ways to blend the idea of fantasy and noir. Although it was contemporary, it was almost from a different period, which was kind of interesting, because if you look at the film now it works really well, because it's not really topical. There's nothing in it that's modern day – it can work from the time period that we made it. It was enormous fun, and again we were doing visual effects that hadn't been done before. [Oscar-winning visual effects supervisor] Ken Ralston always found a way to take the techniques we were using to the next level.

***Jurassic Park* followed shortly. What was Spielberg's brief to you on that?**
One of the things we talked about was to make the dinosaur effects as real as possible. I think it came from the basic fact that we've all been fascinated by dinosaurs since we were kids, and there's something about them that is intriguing and appealing. So what we wanted to do is make them as real as possible. The idea was to make the audience want to go to Jurassic Park. The challenge was again using a technique that hadn't been done before – no one had made a photo-realistic creature in the computer – it was absolutely the first time. Now, you can look at the *Planet Of The Apes* movies and say, 'Oh yeah, that's the same as *Jurassic Park*.' It's hard to keep in mind that *Jurassic Park* was actually the first one, and yet it still doesn't have the signs of its age.

With all the special effects-laden films of late, do you think we've lost some of that sense of reality and innocence of earlier filmmaking that couldn't be fixed in post by a computer?
That's one of the things that I feel, and that people I speak to feel. The computer is capable of so much spectacle now that filmmakers can take it to that

"WE WANTED TO MAKE THE DINOSAUR EFFECTS AS REAL AS POSSIBLE"
DEAN CUNDEY

extreme where you no longer feel that you're in a world that could be possible. I think it's tougher to get really involved with the characters as a result.

With so many icons under your belt, what are you currently working on?
I'm actually enjoying working on smaller indie films now, partly because of what we were talking about earlier. So often the big, giant, epic movies are broken down to different pieces with the second unit, then the visual effects… so bits and pieces left for the first unit are often smallish and disjointed, and you don't always have a chance to be a part of a whole. With these smaller films, it goes back to the earlier films I worked on, with there being a great deal of collaboration. So I've been working on things that allow that kind of involvement.

So you're now like the older hand passing your knowledge and experience down to the next generation of filmmakers …
One of the things that I enjoy doing is teaching at film schools and lecturing classes. When I was at UCLA film school, we used to have professionals who guest taught. For example, I took a class with James Wong Howe, the great cinematographer from the silent era. I was very appreciative that we had this perspective from established people, so I recently got interested in doing the same thing: returning my knowledge and experience to young filmmakers.

This year saw ***Back To The Future*** celebrated its 30th birthday.

Cundey re-teamed with Robert Zemeckis (above) for *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*.

BEHIND FIVE CLASSIC DEAN CUNDEY SCENES

IN HIS OWN WORDS, THE MASTER DOP DEAN CUNDEY DESCRIBES SHOOTING THESE ICONIC SEQUENCES…

1 Opening murder
Halloween (1978)

"It was quite a challenge, because I had never done a shot where you go from the front of the house to the side, through the back, up the stairs and up to the room – all in one shot! The steadicam had been used for individual shots, but until then nobody had tried a really extensive storytelling long shot. John [Carpenter] said he wanted to do something really unique for the opening, and something that took advantage of the steadicam as a way of foreshadowing what we were going to see throughout the movie."

2 The first transformation sequence
The Thing (1982)

"It was fun, because it was made up of a lot of techniques that were all captured in the camera. We had to make it look as real as it could. All the creature stuff and the head crawling away were all part of shooting on the set, and not done after using a computer. As a result, the film is really acknowledged for the physical effects."

3 DeLorean time travel
Back To The Future (1985)

"We wanted the first entry into time travel to be big and flashy. The design of the DeLorean was extremely good, because it gave us all of these visual things: the blue neon around it where the sparks come off, the fire trails of the tires burning, and the opening up of the time portal with the blue flashes. It was a case of visualising it in advance and meticulously creating the moments and the action that allowed for the visual effects people later. As a result, we came up with some classic images."

4 Goldie Hawn versus Meryl Streep
Death Becomes Her (1992)

"It came from Bob's fertile mind of creating an illusion we hadn't seen before: someone with a hole in their stomach that was live, a woman that stretches her neck and head and so on… great moments and images like that, and then how to accomplish them. The fun of it is showing the audience stuff they hadn't seen before."

5 Raptors attack in the kitchen
Jurassic Park (1993)

"It's one of my favourites, because in a relatively short time it embodied every technique we had to come up with, and every problem we had to solve with all the reflective surfaces etc, yet making it dark and moody and blending techniques like the animatronics with the full-motion computer creatures, but doing it in a way that was feasible and that it actually happened."

THE SCIFINOW JURASSIC PARK QUIZ

IT'S TIME TO SORT THOSE WHO THINK BRINGING DINOSAURS BACK AND PUTTING THEM IN A PARK IS A GOOD IDEA FROM THOSE WHO DON'T. ARE YOU SMART ENOUGH TO NOT GET EATEN?

YEAH, SCIENCE!

1. What is the name of the bioengineering company that was founded by John Hammond?
2. Where is the island of Isla Nublar roughly located?
3. What branch of mathematics does Dr Ian Malcolm specialise in?
4. Where is the dig site Dr Alan Grant was working on when he was invited to Isla Nublar by John Hammond?
5. What does Dr Ellie Sattler have a PhD in?

DINO TIME

6. Which dinosaur is nicknamed 'The Big One'?
7. Where was Donald Gennaro when he was eaten by the Tyrannosaurus rex?
8. What was the name of the game warden?
9. What was Alan Grant's favourite type of dinosaur when he was a kid?
10. What type of dinosaurs stalked Dennis Nedry while he tried to steal InGen's dinosaur embryos?

DETAILS, DETAILS

11. What type of hat does Alan Grant often wear?
12. What is Lex and Tim's last name?
13. What type of extinct plants did Ellie notice were growing by to the road when they arrived on the island?
14. Whose catchphrase is, 'Hold onto your butts'?
15. How many volts ran through the electric fence at full power?

THE GREAT BEYOND

16. Which author wrote the original novel the film was based on?
17. When was *Jurassic Park* released in the US?
18. Which cast member was also the only one to reprise his role in *Jurassic World*?
19. Which Marvel star played *Jurassic Park*'s chief engineer?
20. Who wrote the score for the film?

DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL? See how you did with our [illegible] scoring syste[illegible]

16-20

DR ALAN GRANT

Oooh, get you, Mr Know-It-All! Nothing can stop your intellect. Not a quiz, not a Tyrannosaurus Rex, nothing. When the dinosaur dung hits the fan, everyone knows their best bet is to stick with you.

11-15

DR ELLIE SATTLER

Being the best at what you do means you also tend to rush into things, but you often use that to your advantage. You can apply yourself to any situation and your crazy cool instincts do the rest.

6-10

DR IAN MALCOLM

Some would argue you're just a pretty face, but you know you dominate in your field. Unfortunately you're also accident-prone, which often leads to bigger problems. Keep your chin up and you'll be fine.

0-5

JOHN HAMMOND

Stop what you're doing right now – it's probably not a good idea. You tend to jump into things with two feet and buckets of money without thinking it through. Like, you almost got everyone *killed*.

ANSWERS: **1.** INGEN **2.** 120 MILES OFF THE WEST COAST OF COSTA RICA **3.** CHAOS THEORY **4.** JUST OUTSIDE OF SNAKEWATER, MONTANA **5.** PALEOBOTANY **6.** THE ALPHA-FEMALE OF THE VELOCIRAPTORS **7.** IN A TOILET CUBICLE **8.** ROBERT MULDOON **9.** THE TRICERATOPS **10.** A DILOPHOSAURUS **11.** A FEDORA **12.** MURPHY **13.** VERMIFORMAN **14.** RAY ARNOLD'S **15.** 10,000 VOLTS **16.** MICHAEL CRICHTON **17.** 11 JUNE 1993 **18.** BD WONG (DR HENRY WU) **19.** SAMUEL L JACKSON **20.** JOHN WILLIAMS

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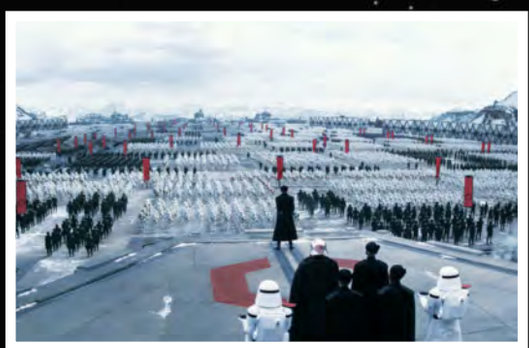

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Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House 33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth Dorset BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
www.imagine-publishing.co.uk
www.scifinow.co.uk
www.greatdigitalmags.com

Magazine team

Deputy Editor Steve Wright
steve.wright@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586244
Art Editor Marcus Faint
Features Editor Jonathan Hatfull
Senior Staff Writer Poppy-Jay Palmer
Photographer James Sheppard
Editor in Chief James Hoare
Senior Art Editor Duncan Crook
Publishing Director Aaron Asadi
Head Of Design Ross Andrews

Contributors
Chris Anderson, Crispin Andrews, Chris Chantler, James Clarke, Sarah Dobbs, Sam Gilbey, Edward Gross, Matthew Handrahan, Rebekka, Hearl, Steve Holmes, Darran Jones, Katherine McLaughlin, Carrie Mok, Joe Nazzaro, Jen Neal, Claire Nicholls, Kaz Oomori, Charlie Oughton, Oliver Pfeiffer, Poster Posse, Julide Tanriverdi, Matthew Turner

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Head Of Sales Hang Deretz
☎ 01202 586442
hang.deretz@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Account Manager Anthony Godsell
☎ 01202 586420
anthony.godsell@imagine-publishing.co.uk

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Head Of International Licensing Cathy Blackman
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☎ 01202 586200

Production

Production Director Jane Hawkins
☎ 01202 586200

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Founder

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